

PENTANGLE

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The name of the journal, *Pentangle*, alludes to the famous image of the pentangle in the Middle English poem, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, where it is a symbol of truth and of the perfection to which Sir Gawain aspires. This association is consistent with the editorial staff's goal of honoring writing of merit in *Pentangle*. The *Pentangle* title also echoes the title of Sigma Tau Delta's official journal of student writing, *The Rectangle*.



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Pentangle solicits submissions of research papers, critical essays, and book reviews pertaining to all areas of literary studies in upper division and graduate courses. Book reviews should be for books written in the last two years. All submissions must be in MLA format (Gibaldi, et al., 7th ed.) and typed using Microsoft Word. Please email all submissions to pentangle@nku.edu. When submitting manuscripts, please include a bioline and contact information.

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The editors reserve the right to edit submissions for grammar and punctuation. Editing may also include revisions to thesis statements and transitional sentences as well as other changes that clarify the work. The editors will work diligently to ensure that the integrity and intent of the author's work is maintained.

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**The Poet as the Prophet:
An Exploration of Religious
Ideology and Sexuality in
Oscar Wilde's *The Ballad of Reading Gaol***

Mary Faulconer

On May 25, 1895, Oscar Wilde was sentenced to two years of hard labor after having been brought up on charges of “gross indecency” for his involvement in a homosexual relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas. The charismatic man, who had soared to such great heights as a beloved writer of the Victorian age, was lowered from his pedestal and forced to live out the rest of his life as a social pariah. In his dimly lit prison cell, Wilde began work on what would become known as *De Profundis*. The prison letter, which was originally addressed to Douglas, contains an epistolary essay which served as the precursor for his final published work, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*. Although the poem has oftentimes been interpreted by critics as a running social commentary on the inhumane and counterintuitive nature of the prison system, it seems that there is actually a larger force which drives the work; it derives in his alluding to the artist as a prophet-like figure. In the poem, Wilde uses the heightened sensitivity that he has acquired through the act of being an artist in order to channel into the thoughts, feelings, and emotions of the individuals he encounters during his prison sentence and give them a distinct and personal

voice. Through it, he is able to emphasize why the prison system is unjust, illuminate the hypocritical nature of society's ethical code, and offer a solution that will allow humanity to return to a more righteous state of mind. Wilde's position as God's true disciple ultimately grants him the reader's sympathy and allows him to fulfill his true agenda of excusing his homosexuality.

In *De Profundis*, Wilde offers a romanticized description of Christ that allows a reader insight into the alluring qualities that he believes link Christ and the artist together as one. Wilde contends that Christ, "with a width of wonder and imagination, that fills one almost with awe, he took the entire world of the inarticulate, the voiceless world of pain, as his kingdom, and made himself its eternal mouthpiece" (1031). Thus we come to understand how Christ and the artist are linked. Christ, in full knowledge of the pain and suffering he was to endure by the hands of men, sought to bestow upon humanity the very wisdom that would allow them to spiritually evolve. The artist does a similar thing through his God granted gift in the art of writing. The gift that God has chosen to bestow on the writer signifies a sort of covenant shared between both God and the artist. In order to fulfill that covenant, the artist, through his artistic medium, must fulfill his moral obligation to society. Thus, we get Wilde's new definition of the true function of art, which is a far cry from the "l'art pour l'art" motto that he had so heavily clung to throughout the course of his lifetime. The true purpose of art, according to Wilde, is to teach humanity the necessary lessons, which if learnt, will ultimately pave the way for a more humane and just society.

Wilde actively fulfills the artist's covenant by offering the reader insight into the inhumane and counterintuitive nature of the prison system. By channeling into the pain and suffering that the prisoners are forced to endure, Wilde is able to emphasize the hypocritical standards of English society. He does so in the hopes that they too might see the wrongs that were thrust upon the prisoners by the hands of man. This is heard most loudly in this repetitive line of the poem:

*Yet each man kills the thing he loves
By each let this be heard.
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword!*

37-42

Wilde forces humanity to reevaluate its own ethical code by bringing it face to face with its own hypocrisy. Humans, by their very nature, are susceptible to temptation. Mankind has knowledge of both good and evil, and sometimes the evil, that is an inherent part of our nature, wins. If all sins are created equal, then why should one man pay when another goes free? Furthermore, why is it in our power as human beings to distinguish right from wrong? Wilde emphasizes that humanity, in acknowledging that they are flawed by their very nature, should be careful not to point fingers at certain individuals whose sins, unlike theirs, are exposed.

If crime, as Wilde suggests, gives no indication of one's character, but simply renders an individual crime as a sin exposed, then prisoners should be looked upon in the same manner as those who were not. As Buckler indicates, "The poem poses a painful human dilemma and challenges the reader to search his imagination for a solution that depends less on a hard-and-fast system . . . By making him aware that all things are a matter of degree, the poem reminds the reader of the complexity and relativism of the modern situation" (38). Wilde's ability to humanize the prisoners allows him the opportunity to break through the barrier that alienated the prisoner from the rest of society. Wilde hopes that readers, through their acknowledgement that they are sinful themselves and therefore no different than those prisoners that they have chosen to condemn, will develop a new found sympathy for their cause. The sympathy that they feel towards the prisoners will allow them to see why the prison system is unjust, and through their imagination, they will be able to develop a new system of rehabilitation that benefits all of mankind.

Art, as Wilde discovered, should carry with it a transformative power that has the force to change the world. Wilde, who was now forced to live amongst those very social pariahs that Christ had turned such a favorable eye towards, sought to use his art as a means to defend not only himself, who was now marked by society as a social deviant, but also those prisoners that he had come to know during his two year sentence. In *De Profundis*, Wilde tells Douglas, "If you had any imagination in you—you would realize that there is not a single person who has been nice to me during my prison life—not one of them all, I say, the very mire from whose shoes you would not be allowed to kneel down and clean" (1045). The kindness that his fellow prisoners bestowed upon him during his two year prison sentence allowed him the opportunity to better understand Christ's fondness towards sinners. In his condemnation of Douglas, he argues that being marked as a social deviant does not necessarily make

someone worse than one who is not. Douglas, who Wilde believes has committed his own set of sins, thrives in society as a respectable man. If one looks at the corrupt nature of his character Dorian Gray, then they may discover this same type of ideology present within it. As Joyce points out, “Dorian’s crime doesn’t sound very elevated and artistic because—like the portrait itself—it remains hidden from the public” (506). Exposed crimes should not be rendered any worse than the crimes humanity commits in secret. Taking into consideration this new found revelation, Wilde decided that he would use his power as an artist in order to defend the defenseless, doing so in the hopes that he, like Christ, could teach humanity to save each other.

There are, of course, burdens attached to becoming God’s eternal mouthpiece, a point Wilde makes quite clear in his poem when he expresses that, “For he who lives more lives than one/ More deaths than one must die” (395-6). Christ, who was bled for the sins of all of mankind when he was crucified on the cross, suffered more than those he saved. In comparison, the artist, through his high sensitivity, feels the pain of all those he channels. The act of rendering himself as the hero of the poem gains the reader’s sympathy. This sympathy is what will ultimately lead to the fulfillment of his true agenda: excusing his homosexuality.

The Ballad follows the events leading up to the execution of Charles Woodridge, a fellow inmate of Wilde’s, who was sentenced to death after having been found guilty of murdering his wife. Interestingly enough, Wilde chooses to change some key components of the circumstances surrounding the crime. Alkalay-Gut suggests that: “if homosexuality were substituted for murder as grounds for the poem . . . ‘I know not whether laws be right, /Or whether laws be wrong’—would be clear. ‘Murdering the woman,’ in this context, may be a substitution for loving the man” (355). Wilde’s identity as a homosexual resulted in his being unfaithful to his wife, Constance. Wilde’s connection to the marital bed parallels the sexual affairs that terminated the conditions of the marriage covenant. By swapping his homosexuality with another crime such as murder, Wilde is able to tell his own story without breaching upon any sensitivities or prejudices the reader may have.

Wilde’s decision to make the murderer the protagonist is the aspect of his poem that most readers deem as unforgivable, and has even led to the uncharitable notion that Wilde himself was a misogynist. If one wishes to understand his true feelings towards women, then one might examine the admiration he felt towards his mother, the eccentric Speranza, who found great success as a writer

for the Irish Nationalist movement, or the lilies he threw at the feet of the famous stage actress, Sarah Bernhardt. If those two alone are not enough to refute it, then perhaps one might want to examine his close friendship with Ava Levenson, who he describes in *De Profundis* as having one of the most beautiful personalities that he had ever known (1025). If the opening murder, as I have made quite clear, does not confirm the misinformed notion that Wilde is a misogynist, then it must serve to carry out another purpose. The murderer, thus, is not a way for Wilde to excuse murder, but rather a way in which he is able to explore the nature of his own crime. His identification as an artist makes up a large portion of who he is as a person, and that is why he chooses to place his heroic depiction of the artist at the forefront of the poem. There are, however, other vital facets that make up Wilde's identity, some of which he cannot air openly to public society. His implication that states, "For he who lives more lives than one/ More deaths than one must die" (395-6). could be a double meaning that serves to offer insight into the psychological turmoil he is experiencing due to his identity as a homosexual. Wilde identity as an artist and a father was profoundly altered due to his desire to secretly explore his sexuality.

A close examination of the text allows the reader to witness, first-hand, the psychological turmoil that Wilde felt while coming to terms with his sexuality. Wilde, like other members of Victorian society, oftentimes referred to his homosexuality as a kind of mental disorder. Christ's love for sinners, especially those marked as social deviants, speaks to Wilde's position as a homosexual. The comfort that he finds through Christ, however, is entirely denied to him by the church. Wilde explores the hypocritical nature of the church in the stanza that follows:

*The Chaplain would not kneel to pray,
By his dishonored grave:
Nor mark it with a blessed Cross,
That Christ for sinners gave,
Because the man was one of those
Whom Christ came down to save*
523-28

Instead of trying to save Wilde, the one marked out by society as perpetual sinner, the church casts him aside. The church should help those who come to them in need. Instead, the institution turn's its back to them. This, as Wilde suggests, goes against the fundamental

principles of Christianity. Almost immediately after having been released from prison, Wilde wrote to the Society of Jesus asking them for admittance for a six month retreat. His reaction to the response was thus, “Wilde opened the letter . . . and read a refusal: he could not be accepted on the spur of the moment; at least a year’s deliberation was necessary. ‘At this,’ as Ada Levenson wrote, ‘he broke down and sobbed bitterly.’ But he recovered as if resigned to accept secular life as *pis aller*” (Ellman 528). Interestingly enough, it was not until after he was denied admittance that he made the decision to continue with the composition of his ballad and rejoin Douglas.

There is not a single person, save Wilde, who can testify as to whether or not Wilde’s deathbed conversion to Christianity served as a legitimate acceptance of the faith, but textual and biographical evidence suggests that there may be more to the story than some critics would like to believe. When Wilde states in *De Profundis* that he “would like to form an order for those who cannot believe,” he may not have been referring to agnosticism, but rather an order for all those in which the church rejects can be admitted. An institution founded for those who are condemned by society and those who share that selfsame “malady” that Wilde uses to refer to his homosexuality. This would serve as an institution in which sinners could congregate in their mutual acceptance of one another and demonstrate the true manner in which Christ intended for man to treat man.

The act of being an artist allows Wilde to give a critical commentary on the hypocritical standards that society holds, but it is not enough to make him one with Christ. The very act of dying on the cross, according to Wilde, makes Christ the ultimate artist. If he wishes to become the ultimate Christ figure, then he must also become a martyr for his cause. Wilde plays the martyr in two real life circumstances. Let us begin our examination of Wilde’s martyrism through an in depth analysis of his relationship with Douglas. Wilde explains that his prison sentence derived in his being a thrown in between the familial feud of Douglas and his father, the Marquis of Queensbury. Wilde states in *De Profundis* that, “you had both thrown the dice for my soul, and you happened to have lost, that is all” (1002). These same principals emerge in the ballad rendering them as biographical to Wilde’s own life. For example, the ballad states:

And once, or twice, to throw the dice
Is a gentlemanly game,
But he does not win who plays with Sin,

In the Secret House of Shame.'

309-12

This stanza signifies his presence in the poem and further demonstrates his ability to serve as a Christ-like martyr. Astell points out that, "endeavoring to bring Alfred Douglas to a self-knowledge akin with his own, Wilde depicts the ambivalent love-hate relationship between the son and the father as a mirroring rivalry, within which he, Wilde, has played the part of a means and sacrifice" (196). Wilde, once again, emerges as both victim and prophet. The key difference in this particular circumstance, however, lies in its association with his homosexuality. Wilde allowed himself to fall victim to the father and son rivalry. He argues that he paid the ultimate sacrifice as a means of instilling within Douglas a greater sense of self-awareness and moral integrity. Thus, Wilde is able to prove that he able to exhibit Christ-like characteristics as both a man that is an artist and as a man that is a homosexual. His position as a martyr grants him the readers sympathy, and his desire to embark upon a righteous state of living allows, at least he hopes, an opportunity for him to excuse his sexuality to both those members of English society and Christ himself.

The Ballad also offers a sliver of insight in regard to how Wilde may have felt during his own trial. This stanza could essentially be read as a juxtaposition between Wilde and the prisoner that sets the stage for the story. In his description of the execution of the prisoner, Wilde writes that:

*They hanged him as a beast is hanged!
 They did not even toll
 A requiem that might have brought
 Rest to his startled soul,
 But hurriedly they took him out,
 And hid him in a hole.*

511-16

Wilde uses this stanza as a way to demonstrate the unjust nature of his sentence. Wilde was transformed into a social pariah and marked out as an undesirable member of society. Thus he is essentially hanged a beast was hung, and thrown into a prison in which he would indeed become hidden. According to Havelock Ellis:

. . . the trials may have contributed mainly to raising a consciousness among homosexuals throughout Europe, and thereby to the beginnings of the formation of a positive and

political identity among male “homosexuals”; but it must also be stated that the results of the trials made clear just how hostile society was towards same-sex practitioners, and just how difficult it would be for same-sex advocates to transform public opinion on the subject (qtd. in Foldy 92).

Wilde turns to elements of biographical content in order to further demonstrate the ties that link Christ and himself together. If Wilde had chosen to flee England, then he most likely would have bypassed his prison sentence. Wilde, however, chose to stay and confront his trials with integrity. His sacrifice of being offered up as a martyr for the homosexual community established a greater sense of awareness for the cause as a whole and forced society to reconsider the judgments that they had cast on those who identified as homosexual, and that small step has arguably helped to pave the way towards societal acceptance. Wilde, through his act of pure honesty allowed humanity to evolve. His act reflects that of the deeds of Christ, who like Wilde, paid the ultimate sacrifice in the end.

There are few writers who can instill within their reader such feelings of immense pleasure as that of Oscar Wilde. While his witty comments and larger than life personality is what originally leads a reader to embrace him, it is the tragedy that stole into his life that keeps him in our memory. Condemned for his homosexuality, Wilde emerges as the one and true literary Christ-figure. In his post prison work entitled *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, Wilde establishes an intimate connection between Christ and the artist. The artist, in this case Wilde, fulfills his covenant with God by using his artistic medium to instill a sense of moral integrity within all of humanity. In doing so, Wilde transforms himself into the prophet and becomes the true mouthpiece of God.

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Murdering Sexuality: Deadly Stand-ins and Iago

Hayley Kirley

“I am not what I am,” Iago says this within the first act and the first scene (Shakespeare 4). This sets up not only his untrustworthiness for the characters of the play but also calls to question the validity of what Iago thinks himself. One of the aspects of Iago’s identity which the audience must call into question is Iago’s apparent sexuality. Sexuality is a prominent subject in recent years concerning the analysis and understanding of *Othello*. This could be in part because gender and sexuality are an integral part of identity and therefore, inherent in understanding a character’s actions and motivations. One character in particular requires further analysis and close reading in order to fully understand his motivations and desires. Iago, the manipulative villain of *Othello*, eludes immediate understanding concerning his motivations and desires for his deeds. Through analysis of Iago’s psychological responses to his own sexuality and sexual identity the reader can better understand Iago’s motivation for starting the chain of events that end the play in tragedy. Iago’s motivation throughout the play *Othello* can be attributed to his repressed homosexual desires focusing on Othello and his own particular psychological responses to them.

Iago provides his own reasoning and motivation in front of the audience in a speech near the beginning of the play. This speech has often been dismissed as the actual motivation for Iago’s deeds. In fact,

Stanley Edgar Hyman says in his essay pertaining to Iago's monologue, "this sort of unconvincing explanation, dismissed by other approaches as either Coleridge's "motive-hunting" or the same sort of lying to the audience as Iago's lying to Roderigo" (371). As Hyman asserts, this particular aside is quite suspect in the actual reality of the play. Iago gives his reason simply as, "I hate the Moor" in reference to Othello (Shakespeare 27). He further claims that, "And it is thought abroad that 'twixt my sheets/He's done my office" meaning that Othello has had sex with his wife (Shakespeare 27). What is suspect of this is that he never references this idea again throughout the course of the play. The other aspect that is suspect of this given motivation is the vague assertion that his being made a cuckold is 'thought abroad'. Iago does not claim that he, himself, thinks that this accusation is true but rather that it is thought by others that are not even near to him but a vague 'abroad'. Iago even goes on to acknowledge that he "know not if't be true" (Shakespeare 27). Iago then says that he will continue as if this accusation was true just for the mere suspicion. This shows the vagueness of the motivation that Iago provides. The other notable aspect of Iago's words is the blatant focus on Othello's sexuality. Iago does not actually mention his wife, Emilia, at all in this but rather focuses on the fact that Othello is involved in a sexual act. In this way, the reader can interpret this as anger not at the fact that Othello has bedded Iago's wife but rather that Othello has had sex with a woman.

Iago, throughout the play shows an extreme focus on Othello and Desdemona's sexual life. Stanley Edgar Hymen describes Iago's prevalent style of speech as, "habitual bestial imagery" (375). Indeed, one of the first descriptions of Desdemona and Othello given by Iago is, "an old black ram/is tugging your white ewe" (Shakespeare 4). This metaphor of a ram and ewe mating is extremely animalistic and vivid. Iago equates Desdemona and Othello's sexual life to that of animals mating. Iago often gives an extremely negative connotation to his descriptions of Desdemona and Othello's sexual encounters as seen in this example. This suggests that Iago categorizes their coupling as negative and wrong but is also an example of how much thought and analysis Iago gives to Othello and Desdemona's sexual life. Iago even decides that Desdemona and Othello's relationship is based purely on sexual desire, particularly on Desdemona's part. He says, in regards to their marriage, to Roderigo that their marriage will fall apart, "when the blood is made dull with the act of sport" (Shakespeare 39). Iago is referring to when Desdemona has fulfilled her sexual desire of Othello. Iago's only given reasoning for their relationship is that it has to be an entirely sexual one. This shows Iago's nearly obsessive

dwelling on the sexuality of Othello and Desdemona.

However, it should be noted that this above example of Iago's speech was one said in the presence of Roderigo in order to persuade Roderigo. The fact that Iago often discusses Desdemona and Iago's sexuality is significant but it is not as simple as that for a clear understanding of Iago's true intentions. One always has to keep in mind that Iago is putting on a show for others, and therefore his words in front of others are not always directly indicative of his own real thoughts. A better understanding can be seen in another of Iago's asides concerning Othello and Desdemona. Iago says about the two in one of his monologues, "I'll pour this pestilence into his ear: that she repeals him for her body's lust" (Shakespeare 55). Iago reasserts this idea that Desdemona only desires Othello for his sexual attraction further emphasizing Iago's focus on this idea. However, he classifies this thought as pestilence—something that is evil and causes corruption and disease. Iago wants to infect Othello with this pestilence, but it can be argued that because Iago seems to have this thought himself, that it is also a pestilence in his own mind. The idea that is the primary focus of this statement is Othello's sexual attraction to Desdemona. The fact that Iago believes Desdemona to be only interested in Othello based on this sexual attraction also suggests that Iago acknowledges Othello's sexual attraction. Paul Cefalu argued in his essay regarding Iago's motivations and psychology that his ability for manipulation came from his "hyperattunement to others" and his ability to negate himself in order to understand and predict the actions of others (266). This argument lends itself to the interpretation that Iago believes Desdemona to only be interested in Othello sexually because Iago, himself, is primarily interested in Othello sexually. Iago's hyper attunement to others, i.e. Desdemona, causes him to understand the falsehood and corruption that this statement contains and thereby classify it as 'pestilence'. Also, this 'hyper attunement' can be interpreted as identification with Desdemona in her sexual attraction to Othello. The negation of himself comes from his assertions concerning Desdemona rather than himself but he also is self-negating in the classification of this sexual desire as negative. Iago is self-negating as well as identifying himself with others. He is hyper-attuned to them in such a way that he is both destroying his own identity at the same time that he is taking on aspects of others' identities. This idea of 'pestilence' also affecting Iago could be because homosexual desire was considered extremely negative and this thought is shared by Iago. As Robert Matz said concerning homosexuality in this time period, "sodomy was not a

category; it was an accusation” (262). Homosexual desire was viewed in this time as deviant and criminal, a viewpoint most likely shared with Iago himself. Any homosexuality expressed would have to be repressed in himself, and therefore manifest in this projected and misplaced manner.

This is further supported by Matz’s interpretation of misplacement and stand-ins in *Othello*. Robert Matz, in his piece on *Othello*, says that it is “a play in which everyone stands in for, or represents, someone else, and because the person who stands in for you may also take your place, this exchangeability makes highly fraught the erotic/political suits constantly pursued” (263). Matz focuses on the exchangeability of characters, and we see throughout the play that Iago is often the stand-in for Desdemona for Othello, often in his representation or rather misrepresentation of her character to Othello. This can be particularly and notably seen when describing her infidelity with Cassio. The way in which Iago relates this to Othello is particularly reflective of his being a stand-in for Desdemona. Iago’s evidence of Cassio’s affair with Desdemona is that he heard him speak of it in his sleep. However, in Iago’s telling, Cassio unwittingly mistakes Iago for Desdemona in his sleep. Iago says, “In sleep I heard him say, ‘Sweet Desdemona...and then, sir, he would gripe and wring my hand, cry, ‘O sweet creature!’ and then kiss me hard” (Shakespeare 76). Iago creates this scenario in which Cassio mistakes him for Desdemona. Iago presents himself in this fantasy that he relates to Othello as a stand-in for Desdemona and one that passively accepts Cassio’s sexual advances. This event could not possibly have actually occurred within the events of the play and so Iago himself is creating himself as a stand-in for Desdemona, particularly in a sexual setting.

Iago’s complex psychological response to Desdemona is quite important to understanding Iago’s motivations. Iago’s motivation for the events of the play might be explained by racially motivated hate and jealousy of Othello as well as jealousy of Cassio. However, this explanation does not account for the death of Desdemona. In persuading Othello of Desdemona and Cassio’s affair he could have directed Othello’s anger towards Cassio only but instead directs Othello towards Desdemona. When Othello first accepts Iago’s counterfeit affair between Desdemona and Cassio he says, “within these three days let me hear thee say that Cassio’s not alive” (Shakespeare 78). Othello’s first intention is that Cassio must die. Iago replies directly after that he will gladly kill Cassio and says, “but let her live” this obviously referring to Desdemona (Shakespeare 78). This implies that Iago believed Othello to already be designing to murder

Desdemona, but there is no actual indication that this had occurred to Othello at all before this moment. The idea of killing Desdemona actually comes from Iago and not Othello. Iago is constantly trying to manipulate Othello, so one can assume that this was actually his indirect method of convincing him to murder Desdemona. The plea of “let her live” also reflects Iago as a corrupted stand-in for Desdemona. These lines that caused Desdemona’s murder reflect Desdemona’s pleas during the actual murder of “let me live tonight” (Shakespeare 129). This is an interesting parallel in the language of these two ‘stand-ins’.

Iago is also directly influential in the decision of the method of murdering Desdemona. Othello expresses an interest in killing Desdemona with poison but Iago says, “do it not with poison; strangle her in her bed, even the bed she hath contaminated” (Shakespeare 98). This ultimately is what Othello decides to do. Iago is interested not just in getting Othello to murder Desdemona but in the method of this murder as well. Again, Iago emphasizes Desdemona’s sexuality in this method. Strangulation is erotic in its nature and the act taking place in bed also is particularly erotic. Iago always focuses on the sexual aspect of Desdemona and Othello’s relationship. The fact that this is how Iago wishes for Othello to murder Desdemona is significant. Iago creates another fantasy in which Desdemona is involved in an erotic scene. Iago wishes Desdemona to die in part because of sexual jealousy for Desdemona as well as he wishes to ‘kill’ the homoerotic desire which has created Desdemona as his stand-in. Iago frames this murder in erotic tones in order to recreate a murder within his own psyche concerning homoerotic desire. He has unconsciously projected and misplaced his own sexual desire for Othello by creating himself as the stand-in for Desdemona and now he must kill this desire. The idea of this repressed homosexuality causing a desire in Iago to kill is reflected in what Othello says when Iago first begins his manipulation. Othello says that Iago is acting “as if there were some monster in his thought/too hideous to be shown” (Shakespeare 64). This is directly pertaining to Iago suggesting that Desdemona has been unfaithful with Cassio but the exact wording of the phrase is particular to the real character of Iago. The ‘monster in his thought’ is this ultimate design in killing Desdemona and the idea that it is ‘too hideous to be shown’ reflects Iago’s reaction to his own repressed homosexuality. The desire to murder is monstrous in nature, but what is really too hideous, to be shown is this repressed homosexual desire for Othello. Iago’s desire to murder Desdemona could perhaps be explained by his desire to ruin Othello. However,

because Iago's motivations in wishing to ruin Othello are so shaky and vague this offers little explanation for Iago's actions. His strong reaction to Othello seems to come from a place of confused desire rather than actual hatred. As was stated before, the hatred that Iago claims at the beginning of the play is not convincingly backed up or repeated.

The interpretation that Iago is homosexual is one that is shared by several scholars. One of these scholars is Hyman who was discussed above. More contemporary scholarship has also fallen in this vein of looking at old texts with a more fluid view of gender and sexuality. However, it should be noted that there is a lot of criticism of this particular view of Iago's homosexuality. Ben Saunders, in his essay about the anality of Iago, accuses these homosexual interpretations saying, "that dogmatically Freudian accounts of sexuality are frequently homophobic and dependent on categories of sexual identity that cannot be applied to Renaissance texts without anachronism" (151). Strictly Freudian interpretations are often more homophobic in nature due to Freud's categorization of homosexuality as deviant. However, there are interpretations of homosexuality and identity that are capable of not classifying homosexuality as deviant but rather a part of characterization and personality. Iago's villainy is motivated by his personality in response to his sexuality. Iago's personal response to his sexuality is to blame for his villainous actions, not his sexuality itself. Saunders' claim that this interpretation is anachronistic is also refutable. As Valerie Traub describes in her analysis of homosexuality in the early modern period, similar contemporary sexual analysis tries to take "the classically-based discourse of friendship away from those who insist on its asexuality" (287). Friendship and male-male relationships, such as the relationship between Iago and Othello, did not necessarily follow strict heterosexual behavior regardless of the time period.

Close examination is needed in order to better understand the complex motivations of Iago. First, the reader must examine Iago's given motivation for beginning his manipulation. Iago states many times that he is not to be trusted, which brings to question the addresses he makes to the audience and his proffered motivation. Iago's sexuality can be seen in his dwelling upon Othello's and Desdemona's sexual life to the point of obsession. The nature of this sexuality is described in terms of Cefalu's interpretation of Iago's hyper attunement to the other characters, particularly Desdemona. Iago also shows the homosexual nature of his sexuality through his acting as a stand-in for Desdemona as part of Matz's

argument concerning Iago. These ideas all connect in the way in which Iago convinces Othello to murder Desdemona and the sexual nature of the method he suggests. The murder is necessary for the compartmentalization of Iago's own homoerotic desire, which he has projected onto Desdemona. Although all these ideas directly affect and create Iago's motivation they do not deprive Iago of agency and ultimately he is responsible for his actions. This disputes some critical reception that claims that interpreting Iago as homosexual is homophobic. Claims that this interpretation is anachronistic also can be refuted by the idea that gender and sexuality do not strictly follow established heterosexual rules. The gender school of thought might be contemporary but it does not follow that gender is also just a contemporary aspect of identity. Iago's sexuality can be examined through several avenues of hidden meaning and treating all of Iago's words and speeches as suspect. This critical treatment of suspicion of Iago directly reflects Iago as a character and stays true to how Iago is represented in the play *Othello*.

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A Study in Interpretation: The Relevance of Dr. John H. Watson

Sara Leonhartsberger

Making his first appearance in *Beeton's 1887 Christmas Annual*, Sherlock Holmes, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's sleuth, has left an indelible stain upon generations of readers' minds, an aura of reverence about the calculating, deducing mind that is the consulting detective's. Another character, however, entered the literary stage beside Holmes in *Beeton's Christmas Annual*, one whose name has become synonymous with the detective's—Dr. John H. Watson, former military doctor and current co-lodger with Holmes at 221B Baker Street. Although many film and television adaptations of Sherlock Holmes' adventures may portray John Watson as a veritable, bumbling fool, Doyle's original tales mark a capable, trusted colleague of the sleuth, given the pivotal role of narrating Holmes' cases.

Examples of television and film portraying Watson in a more comical, absurd light rather than the capable, intelligent one found in Doyle's works exist in Paul Annet's television episode "A Scandal in Bohemia," starring David Burke as Watson, and Roy Neill's film *Sherlock Holmes: The Woman in Green*, starring Nigel Bruce as Watson. For instance, in "A Scandal in Bohemia," Watson seems mainly concerned about whether supper will be delivered soon by Mrs. Hudson, mentioning the fact repeatedly to Holmes. Furthermore, Watson's attention is once again diverted by food while Holmes recounts his exploits after his first disguise, a passing remark even

made by Watson about the quality of the jam he puts on his toast (Annet). However, more blatant examples occur in Bruce's portrayal throughout Neill's *Sherlock Holmes: The Woman in Green*. "Bumbling" becomes an adequate description, as Doctor Watson once again seems enthralled with jam and luncheon in general while Holmes muses upon the aspects of the case. On another occasion, Watson falls under a state of hypnosis after much blustering against hypnotism's validity, stating that "only the feeble-minded" could fall prey to such "nonsense." To further prove Watson's mental ineptitude compared to Holmes', and, indeed, to the audience's, Holmes describes in vivid detail "a dear friend who is lazy, rotund, and of the medical profession, named Watson" while the described medical man pauses for a moment before comprehension dawns. Finally, a sizable portion of Watson's dialogue includes unintelligible gibberish muttered under his breath. His is a role of following behind Sherlock Holmes, barely contributing to the sleuth's plans and inserting a "Great Scott!" at appropriate junctures (Neill).

While the aforementioned examples found in television and film may provide comedic relief to lighten the sharpness of Sherlock's wit and manner, Doyle's original tales portray Doctor Watson in a far different light. Utilizing the deductive method, that emotions to Holmes are, according to the short story "A Scandal in Bohemia," "abhorrent to his cold, precise, but admirably balanced mind" (Doyle 241), it would not stand to reason that Watson's presence can be justified by any sentimentality on Holmes' part. Therefore, ulterior motives must factor into Holmes', and ultimately Doyle's, high assessment of Watson.

The first motive for Doyle's and Holmes' high assessment of Watson is indicated by Doyle's entrusting Watson with the narrative role concerning Holmes' cases, as well as, in effect, Holmes' entrusting; as the sleuth remarks in "A Scandal in Bohemia" after Watson's inquiry into leaving him alone with the arriving client, "I am lost without my Boswell" (Doyle 243). "Boswell" refers to James Boswell, an author in the 18th century who is best known for his biography, *Life of Samuel Johnson*. Boswell, after becoming acquainted with essayist and poet Samuel Johnson, penned his own observations of the man in addition to researching Johnson's early life. Holmes' statement "my Boswell," therefore, indicates a trust on Holmes' part for Watson to dutifully record his cases (if only to add a flair of his own writing style), a trust that a highly intelligent, rational man like Holmes would not give to a bumbling, subpar intelligence. As further proof of Watson's capable intelligence, readers find themselves in

Watson's mind frame throughout the adventures, yet often discover that they are merely a step or two behind Holmes instead of in utter confusion. In fact, in "A Scandal in Bohemia," Watson observes certain aspects about the Bohemian paper sent by the mysterious client, the fact that it is written by a "man who is presumably well-to-do," for "Such paper could not have been bought under half a crown a packet. The paper is peculiarly strong and stiff" (Doyle 242). Such deductive reasoning reminiscent of Holmes' marks Watson's mind as not one of lower intelligence, but one that can grasp difficult concepts and achieve competence in them. Conversely, while Holmes' mind operates more efficiently and precisely than Watson's, the detective consults with his colleague, garnering Watson's perspective of the case before — or oftentimes after — he has concluded his own deductions. This symbiotic transfer of knowledge reflects a balance between minds instead of an excess in one and a deficit in the other.

A second motive for Doyle's and Holmes' esteemed regard for the good doctor arises from Watson's steady hand with a revolver and his essential involvement in many of Sherlock's cases. In "The Red-Headed League," for instance, Sherlock, knowing the dangerous mind of the adversary he is facing, implores Watson to "kindly put your army revolver in your pocket" (Doyle 279). Meanwhile, in "A Scandal in Bohemia," the good doctor plays an even greater part in Holmes' plan to obtain his goal, performing Holmes' instructions to throw a smoke-rocket into Irene Adler's house and give a false call of fire as a distraction admirably, despite his own misgivings (Doyle 257). Without the utter reliance the detective finds in Watson, whether through his skilled marksmanship or his precise actions, Holmes is only one man, limited to two hands, neither capable of a precise shot. Once again, Watson and Holmes complement each other in their distinct abilities rather than detract from one another.

As the final motive for Doyle's and Holmes' profound respect for Watson, although this occasion serves as an exception in Sherlock's mind that usually found strong emotion to be "grit in a sensitive instrument" (Doyle 239), Watson produces a strong emotion in the calculating sleuth in "The Adventure of the Three Garridebs." Having cornered a dangerous criminal in his apartment, both Holmes and Watson are taken unawares by the drawn revolver. Doctor Watson suffers a wound from a gunshot; superficial though it is later revealed to be, the detective allows what emotions that have culminated over their years of working together to become apparent:

It was worth a wound—it was worth many wounds—to know the depth of loyalty and love which lay behind that cold mask. The clear, hard eyes were dimmed for a moment, and the firm lips were shaking. For the one and only time I caught a glimpse of a great heart as well as of a great brain. All my years of humble but single-minded service culminated in that moment of revelation. (Doyle 624-627)

Truly, a man worthy of Holmes' allowing "grit" in his "sensitive instrument" of a mind is not one to be dismissed lightly; Watson, therefore, must be of substantial importance to Holmes for such an aberration in the detective's precise, distant manner. As sentimentality does not drive Holmes, it is reasonable to infer that John Watson, highly valued by Holmes, is highly valuable to Doyle's prose. Without Watson's involvement, emotion, a vital human quality, would never have been expressed in Holmes; how then, could Doyle's sleuth have been a viable champion of righting humanity's wrongs if he had not had Watson, his connection to expressed emotion?

Without question, many of television's and film's portrayals of Doctor Watson vastly differ from Doyle's short stories and novels. While providing comedic relief, Burke's or Bruce's portrayals of Watson do not display his intelligence, his competency, his vital role as the narrator, or his value through the rare emotion Sherlock Holmes displays on his behalf as Doyle's original tales do. Instead, Doyle's prose evokes the visual imagery of two men balanced in complementary skills, one drafting accounts of the other's exploits yet never beneath him in mind or in heart. Rather than an absent-minded, bumbling afterthought portrayed as a joke, Doctor John H. Watson remains a loyal, trusted associate on par – in Doyle's and Holmes' eyes – with the world's only consulting detective.

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“Civility vs. Barbarianism in *Titus Andronicus*”

Brittany Smart

The issue of civilized versus barbaric societies is a theme that prevails throughout history and literature; every culture wants to believe that it is the most sophisticated and of high moral standing, regardless if it condones actions that the rest of the world’s population finds abhorrent. Moreover, even scholars armed with the strongest arguments disagree over morality at every side. However, despite what many think, there is no real concrete answer to what is civilized and what is not because everything is subjective. More often than not, lines are blurred by emotion and many cannot tell the difference between honorable actions and blatantly cruel ones, let alone agree upon them. Many times, especially in Shakespearean plays, characters argue revenge as an excuse to commit the unspeakable and completely disregard their humanity in the process. In *Titus Andronicus*, William Shakespeare implies that the thirst for violence resides within everyone, but it is one’s choice whether or not to choose civility over barbarianism. He demonstrates this theme of “blurred lines” through the actions of Marcus, Titus, and Lucius Andronicus who represent both the civility and barbarianism of a decadent Rome.

Marcus Andronicus sets the stage for the idea of civility in the beginning of act one when he speaks about his noble brother, Titus, who has returned from battle where he fought bravely. Marcus plays upon a popular sentiment of the Roman people who regard their city

as the epitome of a civilized society and foreign cultures as barbaric. As one critic notes, Roman civilization and pagan barbarism are “clearly contrasted” throughout the play with one culture being held at a higher regard than the other (Reese 79). Most of the Romans in the play view themselves in high esteem and act pretentious towards the Goths whom they have conquered. However, unlike the others who are hypocritical because they display the opposite of Rome’s moral code, Marcus actually practices what he preaches and even praises others who do the same. Moreover, he paints a picture of his brother as a symbol of Rome’s honor and contrasts this image with that of “the barbarous Goths,” whom Titus has defeated, in order to elevate him to the throne (Shakespeare *Titus Andronicus* 1.1.28). Ironically, the reader realizes in the end that Marcus is perhaps the most civilized character in the play because he does not stray in his values or act on impulse as beasts do. He sets the precedents for his actions in act one when he attempts to settle the dispute between Saturninus and Bassianus, thereby revealing great leadership quality. However, as many people know, often the ones most deserving to rule desire power the least.

Marcus chooses civility and reason every time and entreats others to follow suit as demonstrated further in act one where he begs Titus to bury his son whom he has killed, Mutius, with the rest of his brothers in the family tomb. Marcus says to Titus “Thou art a Roman, be not barbarous,” which reinstates Marcus’ humanity and underscores Titus’ callousness (1.1.378). Marcus, as a symbol of the true Roman honor code, calls out his own brother’s dishonorable actions, even if it might mean facing Titus’ wrath. According to one scholar, when Titus religiously observes Roman ceremonies and traditions without questioning their moral consequences, he “reveals his blindness to the barbarity [...] of the Roman honor code he embodies,” (Christiansen 362). Titus often ignores the reality of the situation and adheres to the concrete stagnancy of ancient Roman law instead of appealing to reason or treating each case as individual. On the other hand, Marcus chooses to be civil and understands that sometimes ancient Roman tradition is not meant to be followed word for word. The law is supposed to uphold a certain moral code and Marcus represents that code. Additionally, he is the only one who seems to care about his “sweet niece” Lavinia’s well-being after she is mutilated and raped. Unlike Titus, who feels bad for himself more than anything at the beginning of act four, Marcus helps Lavinia tell her story and asks that “Heaven guide thy pen to print thy sorrows plain” (4.1.75). His tenderness towards Lavinia further reveals his role

as the ultimate symbol of Roman honor.

On the opposite end of the spectrum is Titus who is the supposed “hero” of the play. However, he acts as barbarically as he believes the Goths to be. He begins in act one by cruelly murdering Alarbus, son of Tamora the Goth queen, for a ritual sacrifice even after she begs for mercy on her knees. As a result, this reinforces a belief among the Goths that the Romans are far worse than their own culture. In their eyes, the Romans are worse not only because of their deeds, but also because they masquerade their actions as honorable. The Romans that hold the Goths captive can justify their cruelty through ancient Roman law. As noted by one critic, “Tamora and her sons, seen by the Romans as barbaric and violent, in turn decry the Roman spectacle of retaliation and vengeance as primitive and inhuman” (Easo Smith 319). Although the Romans see the Goths as violent and barbaric, the Goths in turn see the Romans as just as primitive and beast-like. The captured Goths are afraid because they have nowhere to go and they have no idea what the supposedly “civilized” Romans are capable of. Moreover, Tamora’s son Chiron, who is disturbed by the Roman practice of Alarbus’ bloody sacrifice, even comments, “Was never Scythia half so barbarous!” which is an allusion to a culture of reputed cruelty, a contrast to the civilized society that Rome is supposed to be (1.1.131).

The fact that Titus chooses to sacrifice yet another Goth even though his side has won the war makes the Romans seem even more inhumane to the prisoners of war held captive there. One scholar discusses the fact that the Romans use a form of projection to justify their heinous deeds against the Goths and he states, “Since the Romans themselves are extremists in the play, their attribution of extremism to outsiders is a scapegoating transparent even to its victims” (Royster 441). According to Royster, the Romans use the Goths as scapegoats and even the Goths can see through the Romans’ allegedly “honorable” pretenses. Titus uses these false pretenses to further his thirst for violence and in doing so, only fuels the hatred that the Goths feel for the Romans. He digs himself even further into the chasm of barbarity when he kills his own son Mutius for supporting his brother Bassianus in his betrothal to Lavinia. If he is not barbaric before, he most certainly is now because he impulsively kills one of his own without thinking it through, or even stopping to hear Mutius speak about why he chooses to guard the way for Bassianus. Before Titus kills his son, Mutius even asks for mercy which is not granted. This is the second instance that Titus chooses barbarity over reason and honorableness. According to one critic,

“The consistent refusals of reasonable requests for mercy and justice symbolize the chaotic state into which Rome lapses for a time,” (Reese 81). Each time Titus chooses violence over forgiveness or mercy, it symbolizes the decadence of the moral state of Rome. These inhumane acts are only counteracted when Lucius or Marcus make honorable choices instead of barbaric ones.

Later in act five, Titus’ barbarity and senseless cruelty only grows after his daughter is mutilated and raped by Chiron and Demetrius. He strings them upside down while holding a knife and says he will “grind [their] bones to dust, / And with [their] blood [he’ll] make a paste/ [...] And make two pasties of [their] shameful heads” (5.2.186-89). After he kills the brothers and bakes them into pies, he then feeds them to their mother; the peak moment of barbarity in the play. This act is so over the top and beyond revenge or even “eye for an eye” that it reveals Titus as the ultimate barbarian. At this point, he has completely thrown reason and kindness over the edge and gives in to his all-consuming pride. If it were not for his blind belief in Roman tradition and the “honorableness” of revenge, Titus would not have given into this deadly sin. In fact, one critic states that because Titus believes in his own distorted self-righteousness, it results in his desire for violence, “[...] Titus reveals his unawareness of his thought process and his blindness to his own resulting egoism and barbarity,” (Christiansen 360). At the end of the play, Titus does not care about avenging Lavinia, he only cares about avenging his wounded pride which results in his unhindered cruelty. No matter how many horrible grievances have happened to him, this was not called for and his vindictiveness reached another level. This was a crime of a senseless villain who plots and receives a sadistic enjoyment out of seeing his foe eat her own kin. Moreover, as stated previously, he murders his own daughter for selfish reasons “And with thy shame thy father’s sorrow die” (5.3.46). Titus loses any shred of humanity he withheld when he kills her. He does not even view her as a person; he sees her as an object that has been defiled by barbarous Goths. As one scholar states, “With his children reduced to material icons, these figures, though suggesting his love, reflect his dehumanization, and because his children lose their value when they are associated with dishonor, Titus reveals that he never sees them as more than symbols,” (Christiansen 360). Because Titus sees his children as nothing more than “icons,” he not only dehumanizes them, but himself as well. They are a part of him and when he does not acknowledge that, he reveals that he is a cruel and senseless monster.

Finally, Titus’ son Lucius is a blend of both characteristics of

barbarianism and civility. Throughout the play, the reader sees that there are very black and white categories of each characteristic, but not much gray area. In this sense, Lucius is a gray area, carrying both the potential for violence from his father and the potential for fairness from his uncle. According to one critic, "It is very clear that the characters are either wholly good or wholly bad" with a couple of "exceptions" (Reese 79). Aaron with his compassion for his child is one of those exceptions and Lucius with his mercy is another. In act one however, Lucius leans more towards barbarity when he tells Titus to make a sacrifice of Alarbus "And with our swords upon a pile of wood/ Let's hew his limbs till they be clean consumed" (1.1.128-29). There is no real reason for them to kill Alarbus after they have already decimated the Goth army, yet they do it anyway and it is this merciless cruelty that makes Lucius barbaric. It is true that he means to "appease the shadows" but in truth, the sacrifice serves no real reason. It is a mere public display of the victorious war that comes before the opening of the play and is meant to stir fierce pride within the Roman citizens. As one critic states, "Interestingly, every subsequent death or violence in the play occurs as a byproduct of public ceremony and celebration," (Easo Smith 318). The Roman people celebrate the victory of war at the beginning of act one, but Alarbus' death is soon to follow after.

The contrast of excessive celebration with excessive death is a theme that parallels with the equally paradoxical motif of civilization and barbarianism throughout the action of the play. However, we do see Lucius' humane side later in the play when he spares Tamora and Aaron's child even after threatening to "First hang the child, that he may see it sprawl,/ A sight to vex the father's soul withal" (5.1.51-52). The fact that he does threaten to kill the child and yet shows mercy reveals that although he does withhold the potential for barbarity in his soul, he can and sometimes does choose to be civilized like Marcus. Moreover, one scholar states that when the "pious Lucius threatens to murder the baby Aaron fiercely attempts to preserve" it proves that no hero is completely honorable "nor is any villain completely lacking compassion," (Lugo 416). Lugo implies that there is more gray area than one imagines. The lines between civilization and barbarity are blurred which means that although Lucius seems to be very virtuous, he also has the potential for villainy. However, he does falter with this choice and that implies on some level that he believes it is too cruel to kill a child and make the father watch. Lucius, unlike his father, actually shows mercy in this instance and does not exact unusual or callous revenge. However, his barbarity does

not cease to exist because he buries Aaron alive. His line “Bring down the devil, for he must not die/ So sweet a death as hanging presently” reveals that he still enjoys seeing torture inflicted on his enemies which is incredibly uncivilized (5.1.145-46). Lucius wants Aaron to die slowly and painfully and this is why at least part of him is barbaric.

In conclusion, William Shakespeare implies that the thirst for violence resides within everyone, but it is one’s choice whether or not to choose civility over barbarianism. He implies that the barbarians are the Romans who utilize their power to make the Goths feel even more helpless than they already are. Although one critic makes that argument that barbarity is clearly in the “eye of the beholder,” it seems as though the Romans are the most to blame because they mask their barbarity under false pretenses of “honor” and are supposed to hold themselves to a higher standard (Royster 441). Aaron even comments about the fact that the Romans act hypocritically and often completely disregard their code of ethics, “know ye not in Rome/ How furious and impatient they be, / And cannot brook competitors in love?” (2.1.75-77). Titus pretends that he is following the ancient code of Rome, but he is really justifying his horrendous actions. Not even Lucius, who is a gray area, is completely free from the barbaric “stain” that colors his reason. Like his father, Lucius is sadistic and is not the honorable ruler that Rome needs. Although he rallies with the Goths in the end, this more indicative of a decadent Rome that is nearly overcome by violence and barbarianism than it is of Lucius’ qualifying virtues. It is true that he does not exact revenge in the same way as his father but their actions do parallel. The ending foreshadows Rome’s impending doom as the images of birds feed off of a supposedly savage Tamora grace the last lines by Lucius. The blurred lines between barbarianism and civility implied in the play are almost obliterated in the end as the reader realizes that Rome is in for more chaos because its leaders have set the precedent for barbaric actions. The only hope is in Marcus Andronicus who stays true to his civil nature and still lets Lucius take the throne in the end.

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Fashion, Etiquette, and Class in Nella Larsen's Novel *Passing*

Brad Warren

The Harlem Renaissance was a period of unparalleled growth and innovation for many aspects of African-American culture in the United States. In terms of literature, its culmination during the 1920's led to many discussions and publications concerned with the portrayal of African-Americans. One of the most influential works, *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, edited by Alain Locke and published in 1925, is a collection of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction essays, which, in large part, was an attempt to bring awareness to the rest of the country some of the long overdue changes that needed to occur in terms of representation of African-Americans in society. This book also shone a light on another aspect of monumental change in the African-American community; Harlem had not only become the cultural capital of Black identity with respect to music, art, and literature, but it also gave rise to the first "Black middle class" in the country. The total strength of the movement was not only enough to bring national attention to the "Black uplift" movement but it also created the first society of African-Americans who became substantial consumers, and were able to spend money on material goods in a way that was not possible just a few generations prior. This concentration of artistic output and economic growth was unprecedented and unique for its time.

Nella Larsen was drawn to the Harlem Renaissance. The influence

and imprint of the new and exciting lifestyle found in New York at that time is illustrated in her novel *Passing*. As a result of Locke's publication, there was a desire for texts that participated in the modern depiction of this new and evolving class of Americans. Larsen's main character of the novel, Irene Redfield, is placed in the heart of the Harlem Renaissance both geographically and symbolically. Larsen's depiction of Irene highlights many of the new tendencies and expectations placed on authors by the "uplift" movement and the new trends in publications after Locke's book. Throughout *Passing*, Irene Redfield's awareness and focus on fashion, etiquette and class as a means of defining her social standing reflect Larsen's focus in her own life as she attempted to become a notable Harlem Renaissance author.

Fashion plays a major role in defining Irene's character in *Passing*. In the scene when Irene and Clare meet at the Drayton Hotel, Irene makes several observations through the lens of fashion awareness that call to mind an Emily Post-like attention to detail. When she first sees Clare, she notes that she not only has nice clothes, and gives an excellent description, but that they are perfect for the season as well (Larsen 9). Larsen places multiple levels of awareness on Irene's commitment to fashion by not only assigning the quality of understanding fashion as a commodity that has worth in general but also that there is a need to understand the transitivity of seasonal fashion trends. Later in the same scene, when Clare is staring at Irene and trying to place her in her memory, Irene becomes nervous and believes that her appearance is to blame. "Had she in her haste in the taxi, put her hat on backwards...Perhaps there was a streak of powder somewhere on her face...Something wrong with her dress?" (Larsen 10). It is true that one of the primary subtexts here is racial in nature. Irene has "passed" into a whites only restaurant, and she does, in fact, have some interior dialogue about the possibility of being discovered and thrown out. However, it is interesting that the fear of public humiliation comes *after* the considerations of a fashion faux pas. Irene's confidence in her identity is so assured that her violation of the Jim Crow law is secondary in her mind. What is the reader to make of Larsen's seeming lack of concern with being identified as a person who is passing? Irene's ability to exist among the white upper-class of the Chicago elite is quite a statement of the virtues possessed by the main character, and subsequently by the very people that Larsen is depicting from reality that are responsible for the renaissance as well as the rising middle class in Harlem.

Miriam Thaggert suggests that fashion in *Passing* has become a

costume, or a part of the performance involved in social setting, and “with the proper awareness and training, anyone could occupy a certain desired social space or at least give the appearance of doing so” (514). Larsen’s depiction and emphasis on clothes and fashion highlight what Thaggert refers to as a performance, which Irene sees as part of her identity. The idea of clothing as a means of “passing” in social class would have also resonated well with Larsen herself. Having grown up in a poor neighborhood in a working class suburb of Chicago, the ability for fashion to allow Larsen to “pass” seamlessly into the prominent Harlem styles of the day would have been exciting. Her background, she felt, isolated her from many of the prominent members of the black intelligentsia she was striving to emulate. Being able to acquire some of the image and expectations through cultural awareness would have compensated for not having the strong traditions and family ties afforded to other prominent figures of the era (Davis *Renaissance* 156).

In the modern, consumer-driven society, the word “materialism” has become stigmatized in a way that would not have been applicable to the new middle class forming in Harlem at the time of *Passing*’s publication. The economic purchasing power was both new and evidence that the “uplift” movement was making progress. Larsen shows this when Irene is busy hosting the party for the Negro Welfare League (N.W.L.). A friend notices her stress level and suggests, “Buy yourself an expensive new frock” (Larsen 65). Not only does Irene’s friend suggest she engage in a little “retail therapy,” she says to make it an expensive one as well, and makes a joke about how whenever she becomes depressed, it’s money out of her husband’s pocket. It is also worth noting that one of the first actions we see from Irene is her shopping to the point of exhaustion on a hot day in Chicago. Larsen uses these examples to solidify Irene’s affluence and highlight her class standing.

Within the narrative of Locke’s *New Negro* and the “uplift” movement, there is an implied sense of unity and responsibility of the “uplifted” to help the majority of African-Americans who remain in poverty (Gates and Jarrett 10). Irene’s consciousness of the situation and desire to remain as an example (at least in appearance) of the idealized “uplifted” couple shows in her volunteer work with the fictional organization that Larsen creates for the novel. “It’s the N.W.L. dance’, she explained, ‘the Negro Welfare League, you know. I’m on the committee, or, rather, I *am* the committee’” (Larsen 49). The footnote that Kaplan includes with this passage notes that Larson creates an organization analogous to the prominent society of the

time, in the National Urban League and the NAACP. The class in which Irene lives and operates is the very one that must spearhead the “uplift” movement in the fictional world of *Passing*, and in the real world itself. That expectation, as well as its ability, shows Irene’s class awareness.

Larsen also suggests the theme of responsibility of the middle class in the exchange Irene has with Clare during this scene. Clare, another of the main characters in the novel, is a bi-racial woman who is “passing” as a white woman. She has recently decided to attempt to reconnect with her African-American roots. When she inquires about the nature of the dance and why white people are often in attendance, Irene finishes her explanation with a rejoinder about whites that live to “gaze on the Negros” (Larsen 50). This comment seems to alienate and admonish Clare, who has willingly left the community she was born into, which draws attention to her outsider status. This fact is highlighted again when Clare, who ignored Irene’s jab, persists in attending, and Irene inquires if she wants to go “because so many other white people go?” (Larsen 50). This is a very contentious dialogue between Irene and Clare, who are usually very refined with their exchanges throughout the novel. Again, Irene points out the lack of participation on Clare’s part for the majority of her adult life. Larsen seems to want to draw attention to the cause of “uplift” and the personal responsibility of the individual to more than themselves.

There is an excellent juxtaposition of characters and class legibility when Irene has tea with Clare and Gertrude. The reader sees how Larsen uses style and etiquette awareness to show Irene in relation to someone who does not exemplify the social class she represents. In this scene, Gertrude is shown to lack some of the fashion sensibilities and social tact seen in the other two characters, and Irene is quite critical in her thoughts.

Her black hair was clipt, and by some unfortunate means all the live curliness had gone from it. Her over-trimmed Georgette *crepe* dress was too short and showed an appalling amount of leg, stout legs in sleazy stockings of a rose-beige shade. Her plump hands were newly and not too competently manicured-for the occasion, probably. And she wasn’t smoking. (Larsen 25)

Irene’s description of Gertrude’s dress comments on both a lack of knowledge of style as well as taste. The “over-trimmed” dress may be Gertrude’s lack of style awareness, but it also comes off as

compensatory in nature when worn by a character like Gertrude. It seems as if the dress is trying too hard to suggest "class," but it is unable to fool Irene. The dress also comes up short in terms of hemline, and the lack of propriety is out of place. Irene makes a judgment that Gertrude just recently had her nails done and didn't spend enough to have them done appropriately. Perhaps even more critical of Gertrude's lifestyle than her being cheap is the implication that she had to have them done specifically for this tea-time, suggesting that she does not maintain them on a normal basis like a woman of Irene's standing should.

Larsen also brings attention to Gertrude's lack of etiquette with the smoking comment in her appraisal, showing a lack of participation in behaviors of middle-class women like Irene and Clare. She not only looks out of place due to poor fashion choices but also her actions, or lack thereof, highlight an absence of conformity. Larsen continues to highlight Gertrude's lack of social graces in several exchanges between the women. When Irene inquires about Fred, Gertrude's husband, Gertrude does not respond with polite or genial conversation, but with a brief, "Oh, he's alright" (Larsen 24). A full minute of awkward silence ensues as the conversation is stymied by the brief answer, subjecting all three women to an unrefined and unscripted moment. Her inability to participate in the conversation leads to this awkward moment for two reasons. Gertrude's husband is a butcher, and discussing that would be a poor choice of subject, only highlighting her lower social status when, for example, compared to Clare's description of her lengthy travels throughout Europe. In addition to not being able to discuss her own life for fear of accenting the lack of similarity amongst the other two women, she also seems to lack the ability or desire to extenuate the situation with suitable discourse. This exchange highlights the fact that Gertrude is not the social equal of Irene or Clare, and Larsen seems motivated to juxtapose the characters in order to associate Irene's character with the rising middle class in Harlem at that time.

The changing narrative and portrayal of African-Americans in literature during the Harlem Renaissance took many forms, and a major goal was to eliminate and correct the damage done by extreme and clichéd depictions that had come to misrepresent the Black community in America. *Passing* is not a novel that addresses the traditional or historical problems faced by the community, but it still deals with the changing narrative of African-Americans and can be linked to the changing dynamics of the time. As Thaggert suggests, this story can be seen as a "modernist tale of manners, a subtle style

manual” and should be considered a contemporary comment on the popularity of works similar to Emily Post’s famous publication on etiquette in 1922, or more applicably in this case, works such as *National Capital Code of Etiquette* by Edward Green (514). This novel gives the reader a wonderful look inside the creation of the rising middle class, and how it decides to establish its own identity and specific social codes. Larsen decided to make becoming a part of the social and economic revolution a goal. In doing so, *Passing* serves as one person’s vision, closely connected to the heart of the movement at the time, on fashion and etiquette as it was in the late 1920’s. Larsen used the new platform afforded authors of the Harlem Renaissance to add to the depiction of African-Americans, not by addressing the historical representations often found in literature that subvert, but by showing a new class that emerged during the Renaissance. Due to her efforts and participation, she understood the climate of the times, as well as the type of literature that would be likely to be published and help her realize the goal of becoming associated with the Harlem Renaissance.

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The Unghosting of Medgar Evers: Exploring Beckwith's Unconscious

Robert Kempton

When Sigmund Freud published *Interpretation of Dreams* in 1899, it forever changed the way thoughts and dreams were perceived, giving credence to a force beyond mankind's control that came to be known as the "unconscious." Freud further extended his theories of the mind when he published *The Ego & The Id* in 1923, dividing the mental capacity into three distinct tiers of processes: the id, the ego, and the superego. In this vein, psychoanalysis, a discipline founded by Freud, came to view dreams as direct interpretations of this unknown, along with the collected thoughts and ideas gathered through the senses. In Frank X Walker's *Turn Me Loose: The Unghosting of Medgar Evers*, the reader is given a chance to interpret dreams through the perspective of Byron De La Beckwith, noted Klu Klux Klan authority figure, who murdered Medgar Evers, Field Secretary of the NAACP in Mississippi, during the rise of the Civil Rights Movement in the South. In this collection of poetry, Walker writes three pieces that chronicle the dreamscape of Beckwith: "Byron De La Beckwith Dreaming I, II and III." These three dreams, according to Freud's theories of the unconscious, not only represent a certain level of the mind but also are organized to reflect a degradation of thought from Beckwith in his decision to murder Medgar Evers. From the superego, to the ego, to the id, Beckwith's dreams demonstrate an unraveling process of thought that plays itself out in the collection, and points to the

unconscious as his driving motivation to kill Evers.

Before analyzing the poems, the id, the ego, and the superego must be defined. In Freud's essay on *The Ego And The Id*, the mind is divided into three tiers, conscious, pre-conscious, and unconscious. "Conscious" is "resting on perception of the most immediate and certain character" (Freud and Strachey, *Ego* 4). It is, in other words, surface level thoughts and sensations. "Pre-conscious" is essentially conscious thoughts in "latency", but is capable of coming to surface consciousness through exercising the mind or through various sensations. The "unconscious" was derived from "the theory of repression" and therefore represents all thoughts and memories that cannot be accessed (Freud and Strachey, *Ego* 3-8). For all of this there is a bridge, something to bring all the thoughts together, which Freud calls the "ego." The ego is the "coherent organization of mental processes" (*Ego* 8) which helps connect these three tiers, although cannot completely encompass the "unconscious." Freud defines this remaining area of the mind as the "id." The id "behaves as though it were [unconscious]" (Freud and Strachey, *Ego* 17) and is representative of a portion of the repressed, one in which Freud determines is able to communicate with the ego. To put it simply, "the ego represents what may be called reason and common sense, in contrast to the id, which contains the passions" (Freud and Strachey, *Ego* 19). From there Freud deduces a higher form of consciousness that reflects guilt, anxiety, etc. from the ego. Freud theorizes there is an "ego-ideal" one attempts to mimic – also called the "superego." It is, in essence, the "the self-judgment which declares that the ego falls short of its ideal" (Freud and Strachey *Ego* 33).

In "Byron De La Beckwith Dreaming I," Walker's symbolism and action is representative of Freud's theory of the "superego." In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud never argues the fact that the superego exists, but it was later supported to fully form Freud's theories. In the chapter entitled "The Ego and The Super-Ego (Ego-Ideal), Freud argues "religion, morality, and a social sense – the chief elements in the higher side of man" (*Ego* 33) along with purporting notions of his "Oedipus Complex," which states that children essentially grow to mirror qualities of their parents, thereby mastering impulses of the "id." "When we were children we knew these higher natures, we admired them and feared them; and later we took them into ourselves" (Freud and Strachey, *Ego* 32). The superego exemplifies notions of the ideal according to societal and moral standards, notions the child is able to replicate through their parents. In the case of Beckwith and his first dream, numerous lines and symbols indicate

the dream represents the superego, or what Freud considered “the highest in our human mind by our scale of values” (*Ego* 33). In the opening lines of the poem, “Momma’s holding a baby/with perfect blue eyes” (“Dreaming I” 1), Walker is making a connection to the superego through the “Oedipus Complex.” Beckwith attempts to make peace with his mother, a relationship commonly explored in Freudian theory. By referring to a baby, not himself, with “perfect blue eyes,” Beckwith attempts to adhere to the notion of the ideal child, one with superior physical features in conjunction with Southern ideas of beauty. Just as well, “the self-object (the secular image) [Child’s developed perception of its own body] preexists as an object of the mother’s desire” (Moncayo 566). In other words, Beckwith begins to override the “Oedipus Complex” and create his superego according to his mother’s desire. The poem goes on to perpetuate further notions of the Southern ideal. Images of “tea kettle/screams,” “thick warm soup,” and “a crowd/gathers around me singing ‘Dixie’” (3-14) are indicative of Southern comfort and lifestyle. Again Beckwith attempts to rise up to these ideals within the text, fulfilling his unconscious desires to perpetuate a higher moral authority according to his parents and the society at large. The second stanza, “she reaches for me/but I start to float away,” (5-6) indicates Beckwith’s growth by reaching the highest tier of mental development. Once one has reached the “ego ideal,” one is conditioned to the highest standards seen reflected in the actions of one’s parents and society. The poem then goes on to allude to those notions Beckwith has conformed to, namely the relationship between whites and blacks in the South. “There is a sound like a loud/hand clap and suddenly/I’m floating face up in a thick warm soup” (7-10). Beckwith then goes on to “drink down all the soup” and consequently emulates his “Southern Pride.” The loud noise reflects and foreshadows the gun violence between the two races, and, having drawn a parallel to “[Willie] on the rag,” (12) the soup alludes to the blood of the blacks, which whites have come to feed upon for their divulgence and prosperity.

In “Byron De La Beckwith Dreaming II,” Walker’s poem represents the diplomatic aggregate of the mind, the “ego.” Freud’s theory gives the ego much of the responsibility to monitor the relationship between thoughts and feelings, both conscious and repressed, and even says that the ego “exercises the censorship on dreams” (*Ego* 8). In the fight against the id and the “ego-ideal,” Freud determined the ego deployed “defense-mechanisms” to alleviate the feelings of either not living up to a higher moral code (“superego”) or abandoning the “pleasure principle” (“id”). By-products of these ramifications

– guilt, stress, anxiety, etc. – were all inflicted by the ego. Turning to the poem, one sees elements of the ego represented within the text, but it is less of a reflection of the conflict between the id and the ego and much more in relation to the conflict between the ego and the superego. There are elements of guilt, anxiety, and repression all drawn into one dream, thus indicating the inability to adhere to the “ego-ideal.” In the beginning of the poem, while Beckwith is driving his “new white Cadillac” (“Dreaming II” 1), there are several action words that can be associated with repression: “gunning (the Cadillac),” “kicking up (dirt),” “slam (breaks),” and “floor (pedal).” When the “wooly black heads” (4) appear in the road, the repressed feelings of guilt and regret come to a head. When Beckwith hears them “breathing,” (6) i.e., discovering their humanity, he attempts to deny this revelation – another defense mechanism. “When I floor the pedal they start to sing/and the faster I drive the louder they howl” (8-9). When he arrives at the church, the humanity of blacks is again close to being revealed if not for the zealous denial performed by Beckwith: “somebody is beating/the hell out of a tambourine/and it gets louder and louder and louder” (12-14). The humanity of blacks will be detrimental in his decision to murder Evers, so in employing defense mechanisms to deny this fact, he further drives in the nail to the fate of Medgar Evers. In the last stanzas of “Dreaming II,” Byron’s “woman” (presumably Willie, who appears in the other two dreams) is involved in a disturbing birth scene. “She has given birth/to what we first thought/was a mongrel baby/but after I throw it in the Mississippi/I can see it was just covered with blood” (17-22). According to *Dreams*, “In women’s dreams, to the rescue, and especially to rescue from the water, has the same significance as giving birth; but the meaning is modified if the dreamer is a man” (*Dreams* 403). This develops an ironic twist within the poem, as there is no rescue being performed, but instead a violent sacrifice which reflects the repression and denial strewn throughout the poem. The baby itself symbolizes the worst realization of Beckwith, a new generation born sympathetic to the plight of blacks in the South, as well as the guilt from race violence coming to the surface, or in a psychoanalytic sense, his ego.

According to the “ego-ideal” of Beckwith, having grown with the embodiment of Southern ideals and mentality, his repression of guilt and denial in relation to black inequality should be nonexistent. However, this dream is replete with anxiety regarding black sympathy and humanity. “Repression interiorized within the individual, according to Freud, is always of a social nature” (Orlando 177).

Knowing this information, one can assume that Walker took creative liberty in embodying a more humanistic ideal for Beckwith rather than a traditional Southern one. "Freud was legitimately interested in examining it whenever possible – in which the poetic imagination anticipated by decades, centuries, or millennia, truths that would have to wait to be formulated until psychoanalysis . . . questioned them" (Orlando 134). Using this logic, it can be justified that Walker utilized the poetry to supercede notions of the time, especially the sympathies of Beckwith, to arrive at a more humanistic approach and garner sympathy for Medgar Evers.

In the final poem, "Byron De La Beckwith Dreaming III," the id is represented in Beckwith's dreamscape, and culminates his feelings of wanting to murder Evers. The id is "nothing other than fulfillments of wishes" (*Dreams* 550). It is the primary catalyst behind drives and the unconscious, as well as the "pleasure principle" – the id's motivation to seek pleasure over pain for the sake of self. With this in mind, the text in this poem is wrought with images of sexual and violent tendencies, which can be associated with a more pleasurable, primal drive. This poem is also definitive of Beckwith's narcissism, a psychological tendency that coincides with ideas of the ego and the id. In the poem, Walker uses the word "my" six times, especially relevant considering the brevity of the poem. "Primary narcissism," defined in Freud's earlier theories, "correspond[s] to the ego-representation involved in this sexual phase of development, where the ego loves the image of his or her own body" (Moncayo 565). While Freud lists the "ego" as the representative of such narcissism, it is more commonly associated with the id, as evidenced in "object cathexis." Object cathexis is essentially the ability of the mind to cause separation between self and object, learning the relationship and differentiating between the two – a pivotal phase of mental development. "Object cathexes proceed from the id . . . The ego . . . becomes aware of object cathexes, and either acquiesces in them or tries to fend them off by process of repression" (Freud and Strachey, *Ego* 23). The object, which seems to be the subject of a lack of differentiation in Beckwith's mind, is the gun which he will use to murder Evers. The lack of "object cathexis" points to not only his narcissism but also his adherence to the primal motivators in his unconscious. Going backwards in the text, one can follow this line of logic. "Line up the crosshairs" ("Dreaming III" 7) is a direct allusion to a gun. Beckwith, then in the opening lines of the poem, alludes to his penis when he says, "I unzip my pants to piss/and my fingers pull out a long black snake" (1-2). According to Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, ". . . above all those most important

symbols of the male organ – snakes” (*Dreams* 357). While the allusion to the snake is rather direct, the inclusion of “black” to describe the snake derives notions of envy towards the sexuality of African Americans, further pushing the divide between Beckwith and Evers. Beckwith then draws the connection between his penis and the gun, saying “[I] enjoy the weight of it/in my hands/open my right eye to a squint” (6-7). There is also the second stanza in which refers to Willie and their sexual relationship: “Willie reaches over, strokes it/ and smiles” (3-4). “Smiles” is important to appropriate the “pleasure principle” one adheres to through sexuality and violent impulses, and this feeling is mirrored when Beckwith “smile[s] back” (8) at the end of the poem. Willie’s appearance in the poem aligns with the “wish fulfillment” stated earlier: if Beckwith follows through on his desire to murder Evers, it will coincide with sexual fulfillment with Willie – thus the parallel between the penis and the gun.

“[A] Freudian analysis of dreams . . . however exemplary it might be as an analysis of language, is inconceivable without the individual history of a man” (Orlando 129). While detailed analyses of Beckwith’s dreams are important to discuss the motivations behind the murder of Evers, the poetry is not fulfilled without knowing the history of Beckwith. With the knowledge of Beckwith as a noted Klu Klux Klan member and famed murderer of Medgar Evers, his three dreams fall into a distinct category in relation to Freud’s theories of consciousness. Freud attempted to “derive neuroses from a conflict between the conscious and the unconscious” (*Ego* 9), and in doing so established his hierarchy of mind. For Beckwith, his conflict arose within his dreams: a slow-winding downward spiral, a degradation of thought, which drove him to kill Evers.

In Walker’s collection of poetry, Medgar Evers is a voiceless character that comes alive through the perspectives of the people surrounding his life and death. So much of Evers is left unsaid, but the poetry grants context to his purpose and his legacy. Despite Byron De La Beckwith’s presence in the collection, much of him is left unsaid as well. Beckwith is instead constructed from typical Southern ideals and notions, coming alive through the place and people that raised him. So why did Beckwith kill Evers? Was it his duty as a Southerner to uphold the pre-Antebellum legacy of his forefathers? Or was it within him as an individual? From his “Dreaming” poems, one can see that Beckwith was driven by the forces around him, from the guilt of not embodying an ideal South, to the inability to please his wife, Willie. Evers was a victim of Beckwith’s unconscious motivations, a victim of his repression, guilt, and shame. The truth may have been unspoken through the voices of the collection, but it was revealed within dreams.

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Little Red Cap's Physical and Psychological Father

Rachel Prokopius

The father figure, though not portrayed as a central figure, is crucial within the lesson-giving children's stories many have come to know as fairy tales. Present as the huntsman within the Grimm Brother's "Little Red Cap," the father figure's importance is undeniable. The huntsman's presence only encompasses fifteen sentences of the one-hundred-and-four sentence story. Nevertheless, it is a grievous mistake to judge the father figure's importance in the life of his child by these numbers. Through the lifestyle and mentality changes Little Red Cap undergoes after meeting the huntsman, her story demonstrates the incredibly important role the father plays in the physical and psychological growth of his children.

The fathers' presence begins right after the wolf has gobbled up Little Red Cap and decided to take a nap in Grandmother's house. As he falls into a deep slumber, a huntsman, who knows Grandmother and her daily routines, passes by the house and is confounded that her snoring is so loud. He walks into the house and finds the devious wolf who "[the huntsman] has been after... for [quite] a while" (Grimm 15). The huntsman pulls out his rifle to finish the job. However, right before he pulls the trigger he realizes that Grandmother may in fact be in bed with the wolf, but in a much darker, smaller and less appealing setting than can be seen on the periphery. To be thorough, the huntsman takes out a pair of scissors and cuts open the flesh of

the wolf's large, round belly. Inside he not only finds Grandmother but also her granddaughter Little Red Cap, the girl who often skips through the forest in her signature red velvet cap (Grimm 15-16).

After her grandmother is safely out of the wolf's belly, Little Red Cap hurries to gather a large load of rocks and stones and fills the wolf's stomach with them. Suddenly, the wolf wakes up to find his insides stoned and is so weighed down that he dies on the spot. Then as quickly as he appeared, the huntsman vanishes, leaving Grandmother and Little Red Cap to their own devices presumably for the rest of their lives. Within the span of fifteen short sentences, Little Red Cap's need for her father figure reverts from savior to the cultural role fathers hold as the family's breadwinner, causing the huntsman to vanish completely from her everyday life (Grimm 13-16).

A father impacts a child's wellbeing in two distinct aspects: his/her physical state, and his/her psychological state. Concerning a child's moral upbringing, his/her ability to make educated decisions and his/her overall emotional stability, the physical presence of the father figure, or lack thereof, is incredibly influential in determining the success of his child's development and what kind of a person the child will grow up to become. However, the fact that her father figure was only present within the life of Little Red Cap for fifteen sentences of her story emphasizes the modern reality of the lack of the father figure's presence in his child's life. Nevertheless, within those fifteen lines the father figure has a long-lasting influence on Little Red Cap that continues after he has bowed out of her life. This influence hints at the potentially massive impact the father figure could have on his child's upbringing if he were physically present in his child's life more often.

The Grimm Brothers emphasize the physical impact the father figure has on his child through thinly-veiled moral implications within the words the hunter utters after finding the wolf in Grandmother's bed. Upon seeing the wolf, the huntsman declares: "I've found you at last, you old sinner" (Grimm 15), and cuts open the wolf's belly to let Little Red Cap and her grandmother escape. This biblical act helps to enhance Little Red's moralities, and causes her to place stones in the wolf's belly in order to kill him. The above comment from the huntsman depicts his moral and religious sense of right, which, if he were present within the life of Little Red Cap, was not effectively enforced by the mother alone. After Little Red Cap and Grandmother are free of the wolf, and Little Red Cap becomes exposed to the huntsman's morally-sound behavior, she copies this morality by literally stoning him to death and indirectly referencing the Bible. In

Leviticus, a common form of execution for crimes such as adultery, disobedience of one's parents, and blasphemy against the Lord was to gather around the condemned and to throw large stones at him/her until he/she died. Clearly, the father is incredibly effective in articulating lessons of morale and religion to his child.

Unfortunately, the father's moral effect on his children was greatly diminished when cultural and economic demand took a different turn during the late eighteenth century. According to John Modell in his work *Into One's Own: Youth to Adulthood in the United States*, "[the] father's involvement in child rearing changed from responsibility for the education and moral upbringing of children in colonial times to a more distant form of parenting that evolved with industrialization and urbanization and the separation of the workplace from the home" (qtd. in Raley 1424). This is not to belittle the father or accuse him of purposefully being absent from his child's life; the role of the father as the sole breadwinner, as stated above, became a cultural phenomenon, and fathers had to change to accommodate for it. Nevertheless, as seen through Little Red Cap's disobedience of her mother's orders, this absence has moral consequences for a child. Perhaps if Little Red Cap had a father figure regularly present in her life, she may have listened more attentively to her mother's instructions to "start out before it [got] too hot... [to] walk properly and [to not] stray from the path" (Grimm 14). Because she disobeyed her mother, Little Red Cap found herself in the wolf's belly, a consequence caused by the inability of a father-figure to convey moral standards to her through his physical example.

Luckily for Little Red Cap and her grandmother, the father figure showed up just in time to save them from the wolf, teaching Little Red Cap morals and helping her to physically carry out these morals by inspiring her to do away with the wolf in a Biblical way, and causing her to promise to "never again... stray from the path and go into the woods, when [her] mother has forbidden it" (Grimm 16). Evidence shows that a fatherly presence attributes to better education and common-knowledge skills. According to a 2002 study called "Father Involvement", "a good father is critical to the optimal development and well-being of a child" (qtd. in Lipscomb 256) educationally. Furthermore, the 1998 Condition of Education study showed that, "children of fathers with high levels of physical involvement were more likely to enjoy school and less likely to be suspended or expelled than were children of fathers with low levels of involvement" (qtd. in Lipscomb 258), emphasizing the incredibly beneficial impact a father figure can have on his children just by being physically present within their lives.

The mistakes Little Red Cap makes when traveling through the woods to Grandmother's house hint at lack of education. Immediately after she starts along the path, she meets a wolf and tells him, a complete stranger, the exact location of her grandmother's house and how to get there. He also takes advantage of her femininity and lack of knowledge about strangers by pointing out the beauty of the forest around her. This causes her to become so distracted that she disobeys her mother and leaves the path to pick wildflowers while the wolf follows her directions to Grandmother's house and eats her (Grimm 14-15). The fact that Little Red Cap didn't know to be wary or to keep her personal information to herself suggests that she may not have been taught to do so. It is clearly established that her mother was present within her life while a paternal figure wasn't, suggesting that Little Red Cap's lack of knowledge could be due, as the studies previously referenced discovered, to her lack of a physical father figure.

The physical presence of a father figure within a child's life, especially a girl's, also has a long-lasting impact on the people who interact with the child. In Charles Perrault's version of Little Red Riding Hood, the woodsman is a constant shadow over the wolf because of the threat he poses. Therefore, when the wolf and Little Red meet in the woods, he waits to eat her because of this threat, (Perrault 12), therefore inadvertently protecting her. The fact that the mere mention of Little Red's father figure causes the wolf to refrain from eating her suggests the incredible strength that the father figure's physical presence has on his child's life, and encourages readers to marvel at the possibilities for a child if his/her father figure were more closely and regularly involved in his/her life.

An opposing view of the father figure's impact on his child's life has a psychological basis. Talcott Parsons and Sigmund Freud were examples of prominent and influential child psychologists whose work spanned from the late-nineteenth to the late-twentieth centuries. One of the aspects they focused on, due to its incredible psychological impact on a child, was the role of the father within his child's life. While Parsons focused on the cultural impact the symbol of the father can have on a child and the subsequent actions the child will take, Freud analyzed the father's impact on the child's mind, mental sense of security, and ability to love based on a child's unconscious sexual attachment to his/her parents.

According to Michael E. Lamb, a Yale-educated professor of psychology and former director of the University of Cambridge's psychological program, Freud saw the father as an influence on

his child through the child's development of "a strong need for protection by somebody he or she loves [due to his/her] smallness and helplessness," which, according to Freud, is "one of the strongest needs of childhood" (Lamb 114). This psychoanalytical aspect is demonstrated by Little Red Cap's interactions with the huntsman in Grandmother's house. When the huntsman literally cuts her and her grandmother from the body of the wolf, he is transformed within Little Red Cap's mind from a mere huntsman to a saving grace and a person she loves and cherishes. Little Red Cap's mental image of the huntsman as her protector and savior then inspires her to take a step further by disposing of the wolf in front of the huntsman and her grandmother (Grimm 15). Through his actions, the huntsman has saved Little Red Cap from her Freudian-suggested smallness and helplessness not only by giving her protection, but also by giving her tools to protect herself.

According to Lamb's assessment of Freud, the child also "regards the father as an authority... someone from whom punishment can be expected" (114). Here, the gender of the child can affect the type of psychological effect he/she receives from his/her father figure. For a boy, the father will take on the role of "censor" within his life, the figure that dictates what behaviors are acceptable for the child to emulate, and that consequently show up in in the dreams of children (Bocock 210). The girl will keep a positive view of her father due to her sexual attachment to him, and she will begin to shun her mother because of that sexual attachment (Lamb 116). According to Freud, a young girl's attachment to her parents is different from a young boy's in the way that she psychologically learns to hate her mother in favor of her sexual tendencies and love for her father, while the boy learns to hate his father in favor of his sexual tendencies and love for his mother (Lamb 115-116).

In one way of thinking, Little Red Cap's interactions with the wolf in Grandmother's house are more psychologically masculine than feminine. When explaining Freudian theory in his article "The Symbolism of the Father—A Freudian Sociological Analysis," Robert J. Bocock references Darwin's view that, in a primal horde, the "primal male" keeps all the females close by him and drives away his sons, which causes his sons to detest him and ultimately kill him later in life (211). The wolf acts like Little Red Cap's "primal" father through his psychological and physical subjugation of her in the woods and in Grandma's house. This mentality causes Little Red Cap to kill the wolf with stones, and is reiterated when Little Red Cap encounters a different wolf sometime after her first ordeal who she drowns at

her grandmother's house (Grimm 16). The wolf is a figure within Little Red Cap's life that is attempting to subjugate her thinking and actions, and is therefore disposed of by the Freudian/Darwin theory that sons want to, and actually succeed in, murdering their fathers (Bocock 211).

In another manner of thinking, the wolf acts like a mother figure to Little Red Cap, which causes her actions towards the wolf to be more psychologically feminine. This femininity is first hinted at when the wolf and Little Red meet in the woods and the wolf entices her with thoughts of flower-picking and butterfly-watching. Such actions are usually more connotatively female, and it is therefore curious that the wolf, a connotatively male figure, would think of such a distraction. Evidence of a more specific nature arises in the process taken to free Little Red Cap from the belly of the wolf. According to famous child psychologist Bruno Bettelheim, the fact that "Little Red Cap has to be cut out of the wolf's stomach as if through a Caesarean operation... [causes] the idea of pregnancy and birth [to be] intimated" (177). This portrays the wolf as a maternal rather than a paternal figure. Finally, because the mother is seen as the "rival parent" to the girl, and therefore the person who stands in the way of her having sexual relations with her father (Bocock 211), Little Red Cap believes psychologically that she (the wolf) must be done away with. This belief culminates in the wolf's biblical death, which is made possible by the new-found strength Little Red Cap acquires from observing her father-figure's actions.

Freud, and other significant child psychologists of his time, focused paternal merit solely on the rival parent the father causes his child to conjure within his/her mind, but this sole focus on the psychological diminishes the vast importance fathers play in their children's lives. In actuality, there is no one type of care the father can give his child that is more important than another. They are all equally important, and therefore the establishment of a common physical connection with his child is equally as important as helping his child develop a healthy psychosis. This concept is relatively new in society, but it nevertheless has merit. Substantial evidence exists that emotional stability can be bestowed on a child by his/her father through his physical presence. Studies have shown that children who live in a healthy and loving two-parent home are emotionally better off than children who live in a healthy and loving single-parent, cohabiting, or stepparent-residing home (Lipscomb 255). The father is incredibly special in his ability to provide his children (especially his sons) with a strong paternal role model, and many experts believe having this strong paternal

role model helps greatly in keeping young boys from joining gangs because the boy will not have to look for leadership and guidance in another male role model; he will already have it with his father figure's presence (Lipscomb 256). In the case of Little Red Cap, if the huntsman had been present in her life earlier, her psychological state would have made her more inclined to adhere to her parent figure's example and instructions when it came to walking alone in the woods, therefore staying away from the wolf and staying out of trouble.

A sad truth of the day is that these situations are far from fantastical; there are many examples of children being psychologically misguided due to the lack of a father figure, resulting in a warped personality as an adult. Eleanor Roosevelt created a fantastically warped idea of her alcoholic father after he died from an alcohol-induced seizure when Eleanor was only ten years old (The Roosevelts). According to the fourteen-episode informational series *The Roosevelts: An Intimate History*, Eleanor spent years after her father's death "dreaming of her dead father, living even more closely with him, she remembered, than she had 'when he was alive'" (The Roosevelts). Eleanor adored her father even after death and became so psychologically dependent on the loving physical presence he created when he was alive that she created a utopian-like image of him within her mind, erasing every fault he may have had (and of which, history states, he had many) and fabricating an impossibly perfect rendition of him that no man could live up to. If not remedied, this type of mentality can cause incredible disappointment in a person's life as he/she struggles to find a relationship that he/she believes to be out there but is really pure fantasy.

Eleanor Roosevelt is a very famous example of the reality countless children face every day, providing living proof that the lessons and warnings weaved throughout fairy tales and folklore about the important physical and psychological presence of a father figure within his child's life are far from fantastical, and should not be treated as such. These days it is not uncommon to find a child misbehaving at school and, after a little bit of digging, discover that his/her roots trace back to a broken or dysfunctional family with a father who is distant, or worse yet, not present at all. Equally concerning is the fact that many functional families believe the centuries-old stereotype that a child needs two things in order to have an emotionally successful childhood: a mother who spends her time caregiving, and a father who spends his time earning money so the mother can continue caregiving. Both scenarios spell disaster for the children involved for one simple reason; the father has a crucial and

unreplaceable place in the upbringing of his child that no one else can fill. That no one else will *ever* be able to fill.

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Monsters and Mad Scientists: *Frankenstein and Gravity Falls*

Taylor Carter

Gothic fiction has come a long way since Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, the first recorded instance of this fascinating genre. Over the last 250 years, the gothic has broken into an extraordinary amount of subgenres, each possessing unique characteristics, while clinging to the theme of "strange and frightening events that take place in mysterious places" ("Gothic"). One of these subgenres that appeared immediately after the birth of *The Castle of Otranto* is gothic children's literature, with John Newbery's *The History of Little Goody TwoShoes* claiming to be the first. According to author and lecturer Dr. Anna Jackson, children's preference for the supernatural was a cause of concern in the late eighteenth century, so books began to be written specifically for children with highly moralistic and educational topics ("Dark Side").

There are thousands of children's texts out today that are rooted in the gothic genre, with many playing on a child's fascination with supernatural occurrences, mysteries, and monsters. These stories allow young minds to indulge in their wild imaginations, and it is with these ideas in mind that writer and animator Alex Hirsch created the television show *Gravity Falls*. Premiering in 2012 on Disney Channel, this cartoon follows Dipper and Mabel Pines, twelve-year-old twins who spend their summer vacation with their eccentric Great Uncle "Grunkle" Stan in the strange town of Gravity Falls, with a mysterious

journal that wields the spooky secrets of the town. There are many parallels to be made between this show and classic gothic literature, as each episode deals with a different form of mystery, but there are clear and repetitive themes present in both Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and the *Gravity Falls* episode "The Legend of the Gobblewonker." In both texts, there are themes of monstrosity, such as mad scientists, violence stemming from rejection, and leaving details to the imagination.

In "The Legend of the Gobblewonker," the twins learn of a contest offering a \$1000 prize to whomever can capture the best monster picture. While the twins form a plan of attack, their Grunkle Stan decides to have a family day by taking the kids fishing to celebrate the first day of open fishing season. At the lake, the whole town gathers to commence a day of fun, but it is quickly interrupted by Old Man McGucket, the "town kook," who warns that there is a terrible monster lurking beneath the lake's surface (very similar to Scotland's Loch Ness), but the lakegoers simply write him off as a crazy old man. Dipper and Mabel see this as their monster photo opportunity, but fail at convincing Stan to join them. Instead, they speed off with their friend Soos, leaving Stan to fish alone in his beat-up rowboat.

The very concept of a monster is considered gothic, something fearsome and unwelcomed by society. Dr. Frankenstein's monster is large, malformed, and unsightly, having been created from various different body parts. "His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing his teeth of a pearly whiteness but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shriveled complexion, and straight black lips" (Shelley 573). As Old Man McGucket is describing the lake monster, he proclaims that it has a long neck like a giraffe, wrinkly skin, and had torn his boat into pieces. It is no doubt that these two monsters are to be feared. "The monster's body quite literally incorporates fear, desire, anxiety, and fantasy, giving them life and an uncanny independence. The monstrous body is pure culture. A construct and a projection, the monster only exists to be read" (Cohen 4).

In each text, the monster is described in a negative light, but neither in appropriate detail. Leaving an air of mystery around each creature makes them exponentially more frightening, as it leaves the brain to conjure up the most feared scenario. In the episode, Dipper, Mabel, and Soos must travel to an island in the middle of the lake where the monster allegedly makes its home. Visually, there is a dense fog surrounding the forested island, creating dark hues of blues and

greens, while unsettling music plays softly in the background. These clues give the consumer a feeling of impending doom and allow them to foreshadow future events, but leave the exact sequence of those events up to their imagination.

The belief that science is dangerous is as central to the horror movie as it is a belief in the malevolent inclinations of ghosts, ghouls, vampires, and zombies (Tudor). Especially at the time of *Frankenstein's* release, playing God and bringing back the dead was something that was not even thought of in such a repressed society. Shelley's monstrous text has shaped how we view both monsters and mad scientists for nearly two hundred years, and it certainly will not stop here. Building a monster using parts from various corpses with the purpose of creating and ruling a new race makes Dr. Frankenstein – by no stretch of the imagination – an erratic scientist. There is an invisible line between science and altering the natural world, and it is when that line is crossed that one becomes a mad scientist.

After finding and being pursued by the Gravity Falls Gobblewonker, the monster's massive body becomes stuck in the mouth of a cave. This allows Dipper to capture the photos he has been waiting for, until he notices that the monster looks to be malfunctioning... in a robotic way. The friends investigate, opening a hatch to the contraption's control pit, where none other than Old Man McGucket is sitting. They become extremely confused when the hillbilly begins to explain how he built the robot, offering that he "... just hootenannyyed up a biomechanical brain wave generator, and then learned to operate a stick shift with his beard" ("Gobblewonker"). In the end, both Old Man McGucket and Dr. Frankenstein built their monsters for the same reason - attention and recognition - because all great minds crave praise for their handiwork, until something goes wrong.

But Old Man McGucket also has a softer, more touching reason for his actions. In the beginning of the episode when he runs to warn the lakegoers of the monster, the bait shop owner rushes out and yells, "Now what did I tell you about scaring my customers? This is your last warning, dad!" and when McGucket is caught by the kids, he expresses, "When you get to be an old feller like me, nobody pays any attention to you anymore. My own son hasn't visited me in months, so I figured maybe I'd catch his fancy with a fifteen ton aquatic robot. You just don't know the lengths us old timers go through for a little quality time with our family" ("Gobblewonker"). The pain McGucket feels when rejected by his son is similar to the rejection that Frankenstein's monster feels when his own creator fears and abandons

him. Both react in outrageous manners to cope with the emotions stemming from their rejection.

Having become self-aware in his malformations, when the monster asks Victor to build him a mate of equal grotesque, Victor refuses, and further squashes the monster's hope for a family, or at the very least, another creature with similar properties. It is this rejection that fuels the monster's vengeance and murderous rage. If he could not have a family, neither could his creator. Old Man McGucket's actions were not quite as homicidal as Frankenstein's monster, but he does attack innocent children and strike fear into the community simply because he wants attention from the son that rejected him.

Upon hearing Old Man McGucket's radical plea for familial recognition, the twins realize how badly they had treated their Grunkle Stan in ditching him for their selfish adventure. In an attempt to reconcile with him, they return to the docks and apologize, using their last few disposable camera pictures to capture their fishing fun as a family. This morally sound ending compliments Dr. Jackson's research of children's gothic texts containing traditional gothic themes, but providing a moralistic and educational ending.

In today's culture, it seems that everything is a copy of a copy, with very few things being of true originality. Because of this, we tend to forget to appreciate the origins of things such as the gothic genre and the enormous influences in the field, such as Shelley's *Frankenstein*. There are traces of these stories in nearly everything we enjoy today, from films to tourism attractions to children's literature. To not give recognition to these origins is to not fully understand something as "simple" of a children's television series, such as *Gravity Falls*.

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**“Let not women’s weapons, water-drops,
Stain my man’s cheeks”:
The Male Body and Effeminacy in *King Lear***

Rebecca Hudgins

In Shakespeare’s tragedy *King Lear*, a phrase uttered by Lear himself has received significant attention from critics: “O, how this mother swells up toward my heart!/*Hysterica passio*, down, thou climbing sorrow,/thy element’s below!” (2.4.54-56). Much of the scholarship surrounding this quote comes from feminist psychoanalytic theorists who rely on Freudian interpretations of hysteria to reach their conclusions. Scholars such as Janet Adelman and Peter Rudnytsky argue that “this mother” should be understood as the repressed woman inside of King Lear. Moreover, Coppélia Kahn in her influential essay “The Absent Mother in *King Lear*” uses the Oedipal and pre-oedipal experience to “uncover the hidden mother in the hero’s inner world” (242). She explores the mother in Lear by describing what she calls a “‘maternal subtext,’ the imprint of mothering on the male psyche, the psychological presence of the mother whether or not mothers are literally represented as characters” (242). Kahn argues that Lear’s *Hysterica passio*, which Lear calls “this mother,” is in fact his repressed identification with the mother (243).

More recently, scholars such as Kaara Peterson approach the topic of Lear’s *Hysterica passio* by drawing on understandings about the

body from early modern medical texts. In *Popular Medicine, Hysterical Disease, and Social Controversy in Shakespeare's England*, Peterson devotes a chapter to the phrase "*Hysterica passio*." She argues that Lear "...does not suffer from 'hysteria'—despite the fact that for over a century, editorial and scholarly practices have regularly asserted the case" (37). Peterson claims Lear cannot suffer from hysteria, because "...neither *Hysterica passio* nor hysterical ailment—a far bigger category—is the same thing as 'hysteria.' Nor, therefore, can hysterical ailments afflict male subjects nor can male symptoms only similar to presentations of *Hysterica passio* actually be attributed to uterine effects" (35). Gail Kern Paster argues in her book *Humoring the Body Emotions and the Shakespeare Stage*, that Shakespeare's plays should be approached with an understanding of the influence the body had on the mind in early modern England. Paster explains this body-mind connection by drawing from humoral medical theory. In "The Body and Its Passions" Paster argues, "...keeping the materiality of the passions in our minds may make a difference in reading even the most familiar of texts. By doing so, we may begin to rethink not only how the body inhabited the early modern world but how that world inhabited the body" (45). In keeping an emphasis on the body, and the humoral influence over the body, these scholars are able to understand how early modern audiences would have interpreted Lear's *Hysterica passio*.

While I agree with the feminist psychoanalysts, like Rudnytsky and Adelman, when they argue King Lear becomes feminized in the play through his so called "hysteria," I do not agree with how they reach their conclusions by using Freudian interpretations of hysteria. I align myself more with scholars like Paster and Peterson, with their focus on the medical treatises and humoral theory. When discussing Lear's *Hysterica passio*, it is important to consider the early modern medical and historical contexts of the phrase, and how audiences would have received it. A lot can be learned about Lear, just by understanding the significance behind his bodily ailments. However, I think it is also important to look at more than just Lear's *Hysterica passio*, and also consider how theories from the medical treatises can be applied to the Lear's body and actions. This paper argues that *King Lear* is a tragedy of masculinity, wherein "hysteria" and other weaknesses of Lear's body are used as subversive tools to symbolize weakness, frailty and disassociation within the masculine social order. I base my argument on early modern understandings of masculinity, the body and hysteria.

In early modern England, masculinity was more than the set of attributes associated with being a man. Masculinity was something that permeated one's entire being, and came from understandings

of the body. The internal elements, or humors, of male bodies made them superior to their female counterparts. An example how people in early modern England believed men to be superior to women comes from Edward Jorden in his influential book *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease called the Suffocation of the Mother*, published in 1603: “The passive condition of womankind is subject unto more diseases and of other sortes and natures then men are...” (qtd. in Peterson *Popular Medicine* 32). Women were viewed as passive, and ruled by their bodies and emotions, rather than their minds. These beliefs were rooted in early modern understandings of bodily humors. Merry Weisner describes the humors as being

“...four fluids—blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile—which were contained in the body...These humors were thought to correspond with the four elements—earth, air, fire, and water—and with the qualities of hot, cold, wet, and dry. These qualities varied from person to person, but were sex-related, with men generally believed to be hotter and drier and women colder and wetter.” (32)

It was the presence of these humors, that dictated the superiority of the male sex. Weisner goes on to discuss why the male quality of being hotter made men superior to women: “It [heat] rose naturally toward the heavens and toward the brain, which explained why men, being hot and dry, were more rational and creative; women being cold and wet, were more like the earth... Men’s greater heat also meant they often possessed qualities associated with heat—courage, honesty, reason, physical and moral strength” (32). An understanding of masculinity’s connection to body chemistry is important when considering the case of *King Lear*. When, Lear symbolically contracts *Hysterica Passio*, a disease of the female body, everything that makes Lear masculine disappears.

King Lear struggles to control his emotions throughout the play, and since masculinity was derived from the humors, it was important for a man to be in control of his mind and body. Lisa Wynne Smith emphasizes “...the importance of men controlling their bodies and minds to ensure they maintained their health and gender identities. Uncontrolled, flowing male bodies threatened to destabilize social order by undermining men’s claims to power” (29). Lear understands it is important to keep control over his passions, and tries to avoid losing control over his body: “O, that way madness lies; let me shun that;/No more of that” (3.4.22-23). This quote comes after Lear

contemplates the pain his daughters have brought him, and he realizes the power his emotions have over him. With his masculine intellect, he tries to repress his feelings from making him go mad. However, Lear's continued plea with his body to "Let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven!" (2.1.41) is all for naught as he does ultimately lose control of his body and mind. Because Lear is unable to contain his emotions, he destabilizes the social order.

King Lear's path toward effeminacy begins with him giving his power away to his daughters. The fool brings attention to Lear's poor decision in giving away his power frequently. At one point the fool tells King Lear, "When thou clov-/est thy crown i' the middle, and gavest away both parts,/thou borest thy ass on thy back o'er the dirt" (1.4.155-157). By making an allusion to the fable of Aesop, the fool makes the point that when Lear gave away his kingdom, he was going against what is natural and right, and subsequently becomes "an obedient father" to his daughters (1.4.229). Even worse than Lear being shaken of his masculinity, women end up with the power that Lear lost. Lear's daughters are aware of the position that they are in, and that they now hold the power. Regan explains to her father that he is no longer capable of controlling his kingdom,

O, sir, you are old;
Nature in you stands on the very verge
Of her confine. You should *be ruled and led* (emphasis added)
By some discretion, that discerns your state
Better than you yourself. (2.4.143-147).

Regan is saying that Lear needs to basically act like a woman; that he needs to be told what to do, because he is not capable of doing so himself. Because Lear allowed his emotions to control him, arguably from the beginning of the play, he loses his masculinity and power. When men lose, or worse yet give, their power to women, the entire social order is compromised. Women were supposed to be passive and controlled by men, whereas here, the roles are reversed. When Lear's daughters hold control over their husbands and father, the patriarchal social order is disturbed and Lear loses the title of King, and instead becomes "My lady's father" (1.4.78).

Masculinity was closely tied to the ability to govern and lead others; therefore, Lear without his manhood loses control of much more than himself: he loses his power to rule others. Because King Lear is compelled by emotion, and unable to control himself, he is not of being in a position of power. In regard to the masculine body, Lisa Smith states:

The body was a microcosm of the world, an ideal of balance pervading society. Early modern medical and conduct literature, for instance, discussed the particular importance of self-governance for men...Self-mastery defined early modern manhood. Unless a man could control himself, he was not fit for the prerogative of being a mature man: governing others. (29)

Thus, when King Lear loses his masculinity, he also loses everything that makes him capable of being a ruler, and compromises the social order. Machiavelli discusses in *The Prince* that one of the worst kinds of ruler is one who is “effeminate” (151). Being effeminate meant that the man was lacking that which made him greater than women: his ability to reason, and superior qualities like courage and honesty. According to Merry Weisner, “Manliness, the best quality in either ruler or government, was demonstrated by the ability to use reason to take advantage of every situation” (306). An example of King Lear losing all of his power and ability to reason is when he is begging his daughters to let him keep his 100 knights, which can be seen as representing Lear’s masculinity—or as it turns out, lack of masculinity. Instead of possessing the masculine ability to reason and control his daughters so he could keep all of his knights, Lear loses all of his followers. Lear tries compromising with his daughters he says to Regan “What, must I come to you/With five-and-twenty, Regan? Said you so?” (2.4.251-252). Lear is taking a passive feminine role by asking his daughters’ permission to have followers, while Regan and Goneril take an active “masculine” role in taking his knights away.

Lear’s fall toward feminization begins with giving away his kingdom, but the first time in the play that King Lear brings attention to his faulting body is when he wails the lines we began with: “O, how this mother swells up toward my heart!/ *Hysteria passio*, down, thou climbing sorrow,/Thy element’s below!” (2.4.54-56). Even though men at this point in history could not be hysteric, when Lear suggests that he does have hysteria, he is admitting to being controlled by emotions, rather than reason. Lear is associating himself with the lower elements of woman, which he describes as being “hell” and “darkness” (4.6.124). According to Lesel Dawson in her book *Lovesickness and Gender in Early Modern English Literature*, hysteria as understood by the early moderns, was “...known as suffocation of the mother, or just ‘the mother,’ and was thought to be primarily a woman’s malady in which ‘the mother’ signifies the womb” (60). Dawson goes on to explain possible causes of hysteria: “...movement

in the womb, pressing upon or obstructing other organs; vapours arising from the womb which disturbed the body and mind; or organs acting in sympathy with the womb” (61). King Lear’s association with having these symptoms of hysteria continues as he cries: “O me, my heart, my rising heart! but, down!” (2.4.118). Since what classifies a man as masculine comes from an internal unity between body and mind, when Lear says “this mother swells up toward my heart!” he admits to being controlled by female emotion stemming from the uterus (2.4.54).

In early modern England, claiming a woman as hysteric was a way of characterizing a woman that was threatening, powerful or overly sexual as instead being weak, ill and passive. Joanna Levin discusses how the hysterical woman was perceived in early modern England: “Far from being a benign ‘ailing nurturer,’ the early modern hysteric replayed the contradictions of her satanic predecessors: she was both disorderly and passive; she was a ‘disturbing threat to phallic power’ and... she both confounded patriarchal authority and provided the association for its legitimating” (25). Hysterical women were said to be “internally mercurial, unruly, and duplicitous... both natural and supernatural categories promised to reveal the hidden truth of femininity, its latent potential for disorder and deception” (Levin 29). Understanding what the implications for being diagnosed with hysteria meant for a woman can help us consider why Lear claims that he is hysterical. King Lear’s behavior is also a threat to patriarchal power, but not in the same way a hysterical woman’s would be. King Lear’s symbolic hysteria reveals a fear, or threat to the patriarchal order stemming from Lear’s effeminacy. Lear’s feminization contrasts to that of a typical hysteric woman who is unruly or threatening. While the feminized, passive man and a masculine, active woman are at different ends of the hysteric spectrum, they both represent a threat to the patriarchal social order.

However, it is not only the presence of “the mother” that makes King Lear feminized, according to early modern understandings of the body. Throughout the play, King Lear struggles with his inability to hold back his tears. Bernard Capp in his article “‘Jesus wept’ But Did the Englishman? Masculinity and Emotion in Early Modern England” argues that it was not acceptable for men to cry in early modern England: “In this new cultural milieu, male tears represented an embarrassing loss of self-control...With self-restraint now established as an essential component of honour and identity, tears indicated effeminacy” (76). Lear is well aware of the implications of his crying, which he brings attention to numerous times throughout the play.

When King Lear admits to crying he says, "I am ashamed/that thou hast power to shake my manhood thus;/That these hot tears, which break from me perforce" (1.4.293-295). Lear knows that crying is not acceptable for men in early modern England, because men should be in control of their emotions, not controlled by them, as women would be. When King Lear cries throughout the play, a feminine weakness is suggested: "And let not women's weapons, water-drops,/Stain my man's cheeks!" (2.4.275-276). Gail Kern Paster in her article "The Body and Its Passions", discusses the importance of the body-mind unity during Shakespeare's time:

...for the early moderns, the passions or perturbations of the mind were fully embedded in the order of nature and were part of material being itself...The passions operated upon the body very much as strong movements of wind or water operate upon the natural world: they were the body's internal climate of mood and temper. (45)

Because the early moderns believed in a strong mind-body connection, as swayed by the humors, Lear's crying is an example of his body being feminized from his symbolic hysteria.

As act three unfolds, Lear loses the hot and humoral qualities that constitute masculine superiority. When Lear surrounds himself in the cold wet storm of act three, he is thus further feminized. Smith explains the significance of the hot and dry qualities of the male body:

...the most important implication of the elements/humours/organs system is that masculinity is a function of the body chemistry. In particular, it is a function of the two 'higher' elements, air and fire, and the two 'hotter' humours compounded of those elements, blood and choler... In Galenic physiology, masculinity consists not, as modern psychoanalytical theory would have it, in the possession of a penis, but in the possession of the hot, moist completion of which the penis is but one sign. (15-16)

Since sex is not a genital difference, but more dependent on qualities of temperature and dryness, when King Lear in act three subjects himself to the cold, wet storm—outside of the male realm of the court—he surrenders his body to feminine elements. Showalter argues that Ophelia's death by drowning "...has associations with the feminine and irrational, since water is the organic symbol for woman's fluidity: blood, milk, tears" (77). The same could be argued for Lear's

immersion in the storm, as he does not try to find shelter from the rain, as the fool and Kent beg of him, instead he seemingly embraces the storm: “Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!/You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout/Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks!” (3.2.1-3). The other men notice Lear’s strange desire to be in the storm, one gentleman discussing Lear’s behavior states: “This night, wherein the cub-drawn bear would couch,/the lion and the belly-pinchèd wolf/Keep their fur dry, unbonneted he runs” (3.2.11-13). King Lear disregards what is best for his internal being, and wallows in the cold, wet storm.

King Lear is aware that others are concerned with his well being, because of his desire to be saturated by the rain, he says to Kent: “Thou think’st ‘tis much that this contentious storm/Invades us to the skin” (3.4.7-8). This statement comes after Kent begs King Lear to find cover, because as Kent says, “The tyranny of the open night’s too rough for nature to endure” (3.4.2-3). Aside from the obvious dangers of being in a storm, Kent could be referring to the humoral balance within the male body being disturbed by an excess of water. Rebecca Munson explains how the environment a person is in, can affect a person’s body: “the humoral substances could be affected by physical circumstances, such as climate and diet. Depending on the climate in which a man lived, he would naturally possess a certain temperament that resulted from an abundance of a particular humor” (14). Since King Lear’s body would have been influenced from the fierce storm to which he states “Here I stand, your slave,/a poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man” it should be understood that Lear’s body becomes wetter, and thus feminized (3.2.19-20).

Another example of the storm affecting Lear’s, already shaken, masculine identity, comes when he says, “Art cold?/I am cold myself” (3.3.69). In regard to the difference in temperature of the sexes, in her article “Unbearable Coldness of Female Being: Women’s Imperfection and the Humoral Economy” Gail Kern Paster states, “What the circular argument from heat offers, finally, is a theory of sexual difference in which femaleness is not a matter of genital difference alone but a form of difference thoroughly saturating female flesh and the subject within” (430). King Lear, by being in the presence of the storm is saturated by the phlegmatic humors of a woman. Even the fool makes reference to the cold’s power when he says, “This cold night will turn us all to fools and madmen” (3.4.77). It is after being immersed in the cold, wet storm that King Lear loses his superior male humoral qualities and loses power to his emotions. Kent discussing King Lear’s condition states: “All the power of his wits have

given sway to his/impatience..." (3.6.4-5). Kent here suggests that Lear has lost his masculine intellect to his emotional rage. This loss of male intellect demonstrates the triumph of the female passion within King Lear from his symbolic hysteria.

When Lear's exposure to the storm is understood as a symbolic immersion in female humors, similarities emerge between Lear and *Hamlet's* Ophelia. Ophelia is typically understood as suffering from a hysterical ailment, and many of Lear's actions mirror Ophelia's in the play. According to Mary Wack, "Victims of these [hysterical] disorders were frequently said to either drown themselves or to plunge themselves into a river in order to cool their overheated wombs" (50). While Ophelia literally drowns in a river, King Lear's immersion in the storm can be understood as his attempt at cooling his symbolic womb. Later in the play, Lear's appearance is similar to that of a mad Ophelia. Cordelia in describing Lear says he is "As mad as the vexed sea; singing aloud;/Crowned with rank fumiter and furrow-weeds,/With hor-docks, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo flowers..." (4.4.2-4). The stage directions inform readers that Lear is "fantastically dressed with wild flowers" (4.6) and he even dons a "crown of weeds and flowers" (4.6). This description of Lear is comparable to how Gertrude describes Ophelia's appearance at her death scene: "There with fantastic garlands did she come/Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples" (4.7.149-150). These parallels between Ophelia and King Lear's actions and appearances, show how early modern audiences might have interpreted Lear's malady. Lear is symbolically portrayed as suffering from a disease of the womb.

While there are significant similarities between Lear and Ophelia, there are also important differences. Lear's hysteria seems to be less severe than that witnessed in Ophelia's behavior. Neely discusses the typical symptoms of hysteria: "The origin of the fantastic and disconnected symptoms of the disease—swooning, paralysis, choking, convulsions, numbness, delirium, epilepsy, headaches—is the wild peregrinations of the uncontrollable uterus and its capacity to corrupt all the parts of the body" (Neely 320). The uterus is in control over the person's body who has hysteria. This understanding of how the disease permeates a person's being is similar to how Paster describes the female body: "to specify the female body as phlegmatic ... is not to localize sex difference but rather to distribute it *throughout* a woman's entire bodily habitus. Like the phenomenology of her temperature, the structure of female genitalia was, in origin, a function of the temper of a woman's heart" ("Unbearable Coldness" 432). Ophelia embodies this understanding of being entirely controlled by her

emotions and body. Her speech is fragmented, and carries little meaning in it. She also manages to fall into the weeping brook, so she is probably not in full control over her body. Contrastingly, King Lear does have moments of complete delirium, such as when he fantasizes a trial scene, but there is always “Reason in madness!” (4.6.171) when reading King Lear’s madness. This is because Ophelia is suffering from hysteria, whereas Lear’s hysteria is a symbolic malady.

More important than how Ophelia and Lear both exhibit symptoms of hysteria is what enables Lear to recover from his “hysterical” ailment. Ophelia suffers and dies from a womb disorder, whereas Lear’s *Hysterica passio* is a symbolic ailment, used by Shakespeare to symbolize Lear’s weakness and disassociation with the masculine social order. What enables King Lear to recover from his madness, unlike Ophelia, is that it is he who diagnoses himself with *Hysterica passio* in the first place. Lear takes an active and authoritative role in diagnosing himself, rather than being diagnosed. Because Lear has the power to name his malady, he also has the power to cast it aside and “take off his crown of weeds and flowers” (4.6). This contrasts to Ophelia, who diagnosed by men as being mad, suffers the consequences. Additionally, the suggested cure for hysteria was marriage, “...which institutes regular sexual relations and thus aids in evacuation of fluids and brings the wild uterus under a husband’s control” (Neely 320). A large part of a woman’s recovery from hysteria required men: men diagnosing her, treating her and controlling her womb. Because Lear is a man, he is not in need of another man to cure him, but what Lear needs is a woman to show passivity toward him. Lear’s recovery comes when the obedient Cordelia returns to “Repair those violent harms that my two sisters/Have in thy reverence made” (4.7.27-28). When Cordelia visits her father, she refers to him as “my royal lord” and “your majesty” (4.7.44). Lear still appears to be suffering from his “hysteria” until he asks where he is, to which Cordelia replies, “In your own kingdom, sir” (4.7.77). Because King Lear’s symbolic hysteria is used as a way to show the consequences of an effeminate ruler, his sanity can be saved by a restoration of the social order and destruction of the women in power.

King Lear’s body, actions and “hysteria” function as ways to emphasize his effeminacy according to early modern medical treatises and humoral understandings about the body. Despite recent psychoanalytic scholarship also arguing that Lear becomes feminized in the play, these scholars reach their conclusions by applying Freudian understandings of hysteria to Lear’s *Hysterica passio*. I believe a deeper understanding about Lear’s character can come from

looking at more than his hysteria, and considering how early modern audiences would have perceived Lear's immersion in the storm, crying, and admission of being cold. King Lear's hysteria is symbolic of male anxieties regarding the stability of the patriarchal social order. Because men were not able to be hysteric at the time this play was written, it makes sense that Lear's malady is symbolic. Lear assumes the role of a feminized, hysteric man to symbolize weakness, frailty and destruction of the patriarchal social order.

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