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**Felicia F. Campbell, editor
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From the Editor's Desk

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As we begin a new decade, popular culture studies continue to illuminate the past and hopefully provide some guidance for what is to come.

Peter Steeves' brilliant analysis of "Robert Eggers' *The Witch: A Feminist Folktale of Fear and Floating*" sees it as "a tale told by a culture—our culture that knows it has done something horrible, but can't quite come to terms with it." Clearly, no matter what the era, to be a woman is to be a witch. In the end, the heroine Thomasin transcends the patriarchy, floating above the trees.

In the equally well documented "The X Fantastic" Daniel Ferreras Savoye successfully argues that "the series *The X-Files* is much closer to the fantastic mode than to science fiction, for the narrative tension upon which most episodes rely is the result of the opposition between what can be accepted as possible and what defies our understanding of reality rather than of the defamiliarization created by an entire new universe." He further argues that the fantastic narration is rooted in the limitations of our own inability to fully confront the unknown.

"But If It Dies, It Produces Many Seeds": Ritual Sacrifice in the Film *Midsommar* and the Spanish Bullfight" is Danielle Meijer's fascinating exploration of how the fiction of *Midsommar* and the reality of bullfighting reveal the horror of sacrifice as well as its potential moral necessity, relating them to our daily lives.

Law Professor Tracy Reilly provides an insight into fan culture and explains how the fans and not the band were the

wrong doers in the Napster Debate in “Sad But True”: Why Metallica’s Fans Continue to Fail Them (and Not Vice Versa) Twenty Years After the Napster Lawsuit.” In “Ambassador of Cajun Music: Jimmy C. Newman, 1927-2014,” Michael Green discusses the undeniable role that Newman played in the popularity and acceptance of all things Cajun from music to food to the Cajun version of Mardi Gras

Eleanor DeSousa and Regina Judge make clear that body worn cameras are only one factor in much needed greater police surveillance in “Police Body Worn Cameras: We See What You See, but is it Helping?”

Using film to teach multiculturalism, interculturalism, and intercultural communication is explored in Erika Engstrom’s “Entertainment as Education: Multiculturalism and Interculturalism in Eytan Fox’s 2004 film, *Walk on Water*.” Brianna Whiteside takes us inside her classroom as she successfully introduces a somewhat reluctant student body to black science fiction in “Octavia in Vegas: Teaching Octavia Butler in a Las Vegas Classroom.”

In “Archetypal Development in One Body, One Image: Female Theatricality in Tennessee Williams *A Streetcar Named Desire*,” Raluca Commanea explores the many archetypal female roles assumed by Blanche Dubois manifesting William’s own aesthetic sensibilities. Finally, in “The Princess is a Whore,” Erin Fleet examines the many manifestations of Freud’s “Madonna Whore” dichotomy that still often define women.

Felicia Campbell

“Sad But True”: Why Metallica’s Fans Continue to Fail Them (and Not Vice Versa) Twenty Years After the Napster Lawsuit

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by Tracy Reilly

ABSTRACT

Twenty years have elapsed since the *Metallica v. Napster* copyright lawsuit forever changed the landscape of digital file sharing and the fate of the music industry—as well as Metallica’s reputation that had become tarnished by fans who felt entitled to “free” music. By debunking collectivist ideologies and defending the long-standing principles of individuality and copyright ownership, this article reveals why Metallica’s fans—and not the band—were the “Sad But True” wrongdoers in the Napster debate.

Keywords: file sharing, music technology, music industry, Napster, Metallica, heavy metal, creativity, copyright authorship, copyright infringement, death-of-the-author, Michel Foucault, deconstructionism, Ayn Rand, collectivism, individualism

“Sad But True”: Por qué los fanáticos de Metallica continúan fallándoles (y no lo opuesto) veinte años después de la demanda de Napster

RESUMEN

Han transcurrido veinte años desde que la demanda por derechos de autor *Metallica v. Napster* cambió para siempre el

panorama del intercambio de archivos digitales y el destino de la industria de la música, así como la reputación de Metallica que se había visto empañada por los fanáticos que se sentían con derecho a la música “gratuita”. Al desacreditar las ideologías colectivistas y defender los principios de larga data de la individualidad y la propiedad de los derechos de autor, este artículo revela por qué los fanáticos de Metallica, y no la banda, fueron los malhechores “tristes pero verdaderos” en el debate de Napster.

Palabras clave: Intercambio de archivos, tecnología de la música, industria musical, Napster, Metallica, heavy metal, creatividad, autoría de derechos de autor, infracción de derechos de autor, muerte del autor, Michel Foucault, deconstruccionismo, Ayn Rand, colectivismo e individualismo

“悲伤但真实”：为何金属乐队的粉丝在 Napster 诉讼案件发生二十年之后继续给乐队蒙羞，而不是反过来？

摘要

自金属乐队就版权起诉 Napster 公司已过去了二十年，这次诉讼永远改变了数字文件共享的格局和音乐产业的命运，同时也改变了金属乐队的粉丝之前因自觉享有“免费”音乐而损害的乐队名誉。通过驳斥集体主义观念，并为长期存在的个性原则和版权所有权辩护，本文揭示了为何金属乐队的粉丝一而非乐队一才是有关 Napster 案件辩论中“真正令人悲伤”的过错方。

关键词：文件共享，音乐技术，音乐产业，Napster，金属乐队，重金属，创造力，版权著作权，版权侵犯，创始人之死，米歇尔·福柯，解构主义，艾茵·兰德，集体主义与个人主义

INTRODUCTION

In a 2012 YouTube interview, Gene Simmons was asked outright what led to the demise of the music industry that was in its hedonistic heyday in the 1970s when his band KISS, and other heavy-hitting acts from that golden era of music, forever changed the landscape of rock-and-roll. In his cocky rock-star demeanor, he emotionally exclaimed without hesitation, “The record industry is dead because of the *fans!* They killed it! And what you have now is chaos” (“Gene Simmons”). Simmons was reacting to a set of questions from the interviewer that were tangentially related to the phenomenon of online file sharing that became popular in the late 1990s, when Napster dramatically transformed the manner by which fans in the heavy metal scene—as well as other genres—obtained their favorite music.

From its onset, however, Simmons and other heavy metal heroes, such as drummer Lars Ulrich from the mega-metal band Metallica, were not buying the surreptitious digital platform, which Napster touted as music “sharing.” These musicians and a handful of others saw through the veneer of Napster’s marketing efforts, which were ridiculously embarrassing attempts to obfuscate the illegality underlying its sneaky business practices. No—these musicians recognized early on that file-sharing websites and the software invented to use them serve only to create a digital atmosphere and a cultural attitude that encourages fans not to *share*, but to *steal* the music created by their favorite bands. And, now—almost twenty years after Ulrich led Metallica in an all-out legal copyright battle against Napster—stealing music is what the so-called “fans” continue to do, with neither consequence nor conscience, using existing programs, such as Bit Torrent and The Pirate Bay.

In this article, I will challenge the widespread cultural belief that file sharing is neither illegal nor immoral. Writing from the perspective of a life-long metalhead and former entertainment lawyer, I will debunk the progressive, anti-copyright ideologies that have fostered and encouraged the practice of digital theft, resulting in the steady demise of original and creative musicianship. Operating within the context of the competing philosophies of collectivism and individualism, I will show that, sadly, it was Metallica's fans and *not* the members of the band who failed not only their metal heroes, but also the music community as a whole, during and after *Metallica v. Napster*. In short, I will provide both the legal and philosophical reasons that Gene Simmons was correct to say that the fans—with the assistance of file-sharing companies like Napster—have effectively killed the music industry.

THE DAWN OF FILE SHARING

It all started in the late '90s, when Northeastern Massachusetts University student Shawn Fanning, his uncle John Fanning, and friend Sean Parker co-founded Napster, the pioneering peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing network system that allowed its online subscribers to connect with other members. Fanning claimed in a 2000 *Newsweek* article that Napster's original aim was “[t]o build communities around different types of music” (Zaleski). Napster's subscribers were able to “share” their favorite music by utilizing the company's proprietary software to upload, download, and store MP3 files—the digital copying platform that became obsolete almost as quickly as it did revolutionary in the '90s—on their own home computers. By tapping into high-speed Internet systems, fans were able to obtain, with the click of a mouse, any song ever created—and for free. It was thus not surprising when Napster became not even an immediate, but an in-

stantaneous success, boasting over 70 million users—a feat that is still documented in the *Guinness Book of World Records* as the fastest-growing business ever to have existed (Nieva). That is, until Metallica—mostly led by Ulrich—caught wind of the website and, along with rapper Dr. Dre, who would later file a similar lawsuit against Napster, effectively laid the copyright-gobbling monster to rest.

METALLICA SLAYS THE BEAST OF NAPSTER

Fed up with the P2P practice in general, and particularly upset because one of its unfinished and unreleased demo songs, “I Disappear,” was found being played on the radio due to a leak that was traced back to Napster, Metallica sued the popular company in a US District Court in the Northern District of California in 2000. Alleging a host of federal statutory claims, including copyright infringement and violations of the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act for ongoing criminal activities, the members of Metallica would be the first artists (as opposed to corporate record labels) to take a legal stand against file sharing. Almost twenty years later, whether Metallica would come out the winner or loser in this “Goliath vs. Goliath” battle is still a matter of debate.

After Metallica won a preliminary ruling nearly a year into the lawsuit, which led to a court order compelling Napster to remove all of the band’s songs from its site pending the outcome of the suit, it appeared that the district court was heading in a direction that would predict ultimate success for the band on the legal merits. Further, because Metallica had alleged damages in its complaint for \$10 million (essentially a rate of \$100,000 per illegally downloaded song), Napster found itself between rock-n-roll and a hard place and, thus, decided to settle with Metallica and Dr. Dre. Among other

terms, Napster agreed to block access to all songs by artists who opted out of distributing their music via P2P, essentially reconfiguring its working model in order to conform to the legal rules of copyright law. The backstory behind the settlement was that Napster had fully expected at the time of settlement to seal another deal with the media giant Bertelsmann AG, which would purchase and run the company legitimately and in accordance with the specific terms agreed upon by Metallica and Dr. Dre. That deal eventually fell through, and Napster filed Chapter 7 bankruptcy soon thereafter (Zaleski).

Although this turn of events would seem like a win/win for Metallica, the real hell was just about to begin for the band. To say that followers of Metallica pre-Napster were hard-core fans would be an understatement. As it turned out, however, even the most steadfast fans proved their disloyalty when it comes to preventing their ability to download music for free. Perceiving the band members to have “sold out” to big money and corporate interests, millions of metalheads rallied against Metallica’s decision to sue and effectively shut down the fledgling file-sharing website. Several felt that their past monetary support of the band, including previous album purchases, concert tickets, and merchandising sales, had somehow given them carte blanche to receive Metallica’s new songs and albums for free (Simon), despite the fact that such practices were stealing from artists the royalties to which they were entitled, both legally and ethically. One online music company went so far as to set up a website called PayLars.com that allowed fans to donate money in order to make up for the revenue the band “thought it was losing” to online trading; even fellow metal band Mötley Crüe jumped on the bandwagon by creating an anti-Metallica video mocking the lawsuit called “Metalligreed” (Zaleski).

What the fans failed to perceive is that their behavior both before and after the Napster lawsuit contributed to the collapse of an industry that had faithfully (if not entirely perfectly) produced and distributed state-of-the-art recordings of new music created by their favorite bands. As Napster and other copycat pirating sites (pun intended) rapidly and thoughtlessly led the world into a digital + Internet = free-music economy, the record industry experienced an incremental decline in record sales. Every year since 2000 until 2014, its value dropped, hitting a low of \$15 billion at its lowest, before it finally moved into recovery mode in 2015 (Ford).

Inasmuch as culture has of late taught us that this fact should be a cause for celebration because “money is evil” and “corporations are bad,” such misinformed and benighted mantras often fail to take into consideration the fact that record labels routinely take on significant economic risk when signing artists, and profit only on the commercial success of a handful of new acts (Day 74-75). As Day further notes,

Specifically, record labels provide a typical new artist with over \$1,000,000 in capital to promote a new album, while providing more established artists with nearly \$5,000,000 in total funding. New artists generally receive a \$200,000 advance for personal expenses, which allows the artists to concentrate on their creative work, and an additional \$200,000 for recording costs. On average, the label pays another \$300,000 for artist promotion and marketing, \$200,000 for music videos, and \$100,000 to fund the artist’s first promotional tour. (75)

The resources used to fund these endeavors, without which there would be no high-production world tours, merchandising, music videos, or a host of other fan benefits, comes almost exclusively from fan purchases. Shutting down the record companies thus means eviscerating the bread and butter upon which our rock and metal heroes exist.

WHY THE FANS WERE WRONG AND METALLICA WAS RIGHT

Understanding why the fans' actions and beliefs were then (and remain to be) fundamentally misguided requires an exploration into both the purpose of copyright law and the phenomenon of what it means to be metalhead, or steadfast follower of loud, powerful, in-your-face bands like Metallica. Within the vast historical framework of copyright law, the practice of Internet file sharing is a relatively recent technological phenomenon. While the available technology used to copy music continues to morph and develop through the years, the practice of trading music has been key to the metal scene since its roots in the 1960s. One undeniable characteristic of a true metalhead is keeping up with the discography of all of the popular contemporary *and* iconic bands. Throughout the early decades of rock and heavy metal, this was a rather daunting, if not expensive, task—especially when the mega bands in the heyday of the record industry would attempt to put out an album a year. Led Zeppelin is one band that accomplished that task (at least early on) under the brilliant leadership of Peter Grant as manager and Jimmy Page as visionary, writer, artist, and producer.

In order to ensure that we stayed in step with such musical progress prior to the so-called “digital revolution,” those of us growing up in the early metal scene turned to making cassette-taped copies of the albums that we bought at our

favorite record stores. We would then literally hand out the dubbed versions to our friends who may not have had a chance to purchase the record—yet. In the pre-digital era, as the bands and their record executives knew well, the loyalty of the fan base was such that whenever we had some extra money, we eventually *did* buy our own copies of all the albums released by our favorite bands. Often—if not, always, in the case of our favorite bands—we would be enticed into purchasing an album by listening to the dubbed cassette. Until we could buy it, however, we settled for an imperfect analog copy, which was a mere placeholder for the vinyl record package in all of its glorious machinations—from liner notes and lyrics to cover art, band photos, and acknowledgements.

We bought blank cassettes at our local Walgreens or Woolworth stores by the dozens—waiting for a sale, but always having a few on hand for that occasion when someone would bring over an album you had not yet purchased or heard in its entirety. Or, even better, a bootleg. “Mixed tapes” were those including a variety of songs by different bands that we made in order to play in the tape players in our cars, in the boom boxes at parties or on the beach, and in the cassette decks of our stereo systems stacked high in the corners of our bedrooms. It was, essentially, commercial-free radio—like the precursor to Pandora (that is, if you opt to pay for the premium version)—but with a lot more blood, sweat, and tears on the front end. The mixed tape was a work of art, and a labor of love—a treasure, really.

So, how can a copyright law professor square these “sharing” practices of the good old days with what she obviously perceives to be theft of copyrighted material when today’s fans practice P2P file exchanging on the Internet, using existing programs such as Bit Torrent and The Pirate Bay? Well, for

the most part, back in the golden days of the record industry, neither the bands nor their record companies paid much attention to our underground practice of analog tape sharing. Moreover, some bands like the Grateful Dead—and, ironically, Metallica—to this day openly encourage their fans to create and share bootleg tapes of their live performances. The difference between then and now is that, unlike second-generation, cassette-taped copies that rendered imperfect analog versions of a studio song, MP3 downloads (or any contemporary version thereof) deliver an exact digital dub. The digital copy thus serves as a perfect market substitute for bands' new records, depriving them of millions of sales that would otherwise serve to remunerate not only the artists and corporate record labels, but also countless other professionals who contribute to the music-making process, such as producers, sound engineers, studio musicians, photographers, graphic artists, and so forth.

Given the ability for bands and fans to create, copy, and co-exist in the marketplace in the pre-digital world, most musicians did not seem terribly troubled by Napster's business model at the outset. According to Gene Simmons, however, he "went on record initially" when all the file-sharing sites came onto the scene, proclaiming, "This is robbery. This will kill the music industry. You will all be sorry" ("Gene Simmons"). Because file sharing was not stopped at its onset by the corporate entities that owned the copyrights in the music, the practice span out of control. As such, the music industry is now faced with the phenomenon that fans—young and old—have been steadily enculturated to feel entitled to receive new songs created by their favorite bands for free. For a die-hard metalhead of the old days, it is a tough pill to swallow to think that fans would stab their rock and metal heroes in the backs by complaining about paying some money to en-

joy the music that they love—the music that is supposedly a core aspect of their very essence and being. After all, one of the greatest things about being a metalhead, aside from the music, of course, is the affiliation and goodwill that we feel towards one another, *and most especially*, for our beloved bands.

WHAT DOES HEAVY METAL HAVE TO DO WITH FILE SHARING?

The underlying psychology behind the creation of the cassette tape (as opposed to that of the mentality behind file sharing) serves as the best evidence that the metal scene is one of group affinity and shared experience, as demonstrated by the authors who contributed to the book *Heavy Metal Music and the Communal Experience*. As evidenced by this and other academic treatises in the relatively new area of metal music studies, scholars who write in this realm claim frequently that one of the main defining characteristics of metal fans around the globe is a notion of communal affinity that “can provide individuals with a sense of meaning and purpose that allows them to come together as a community” (Varas-Díaz and Scott vii). In discussing what she terms the “culture of the community,” Deena Weinstein maintains that the first characteristic of a metal community is a shared set of values that “define what is morally right and wrong, what is beautiful and ugly, and what is true and false,” all of which dictate the codes of conduct within the particular community (10). Because metalheads are also notoriously characterized as having isolative and excessively individualistic behavior traits, these and other metal authors universally recognize the difficulty of precisely defining the complex metal community, since it is “fraught with perceived paradoxical relationships, the most noteworthy being that of individualism juxtaposed with a strong sense of belonging and identifica-

tion with metal's communal expressions" (Scott 26). Moreover, several metal academics call for further research that aids in squaring how "individuality and community [can] be simultaneously celebrated" within the vast and complex global metal community" (Varas-Díaz and Scott vii).

After reading Eric Smialek's article, "The Unforgiven: A Reception Study of Metallica Fans and 'Sell-Out' Accusations," the inherent contradictions between collectivism and individualism in the metal scene becomes even more manifest. Smialek maintains that the visceral backlash Metallica experienced in the wake of its copyright infringement lawsuit against Napster was caused, in part, by a "gradual reduction of the band's social and symbolic capital within the metal scene" (114). Most specifically, fans perceived the band as having "sold out" to the interests of mainstream music after the massive commercial success of its *Metallica*, or "Black Album" not long after the lawsuit began, and Smialek believes this phenomenon was the main contributing reason for the exacerbation of outrage felt by Metallica fans with respect to the Napster issue (112). The band's monetary success and ability to cross over and attract non-traditional metal fans, in other words, did not jibe with the image it had initially touted in the 1980s as being "complex, in control, and independent"—in vast opposition to the hedonistic, sex-charged glam-metal bands of that same golden era of heavy metal music (Smialek 107). Because individualism, according to Smialek, "represents a common value for metal fans," the manner in which Metallica convinced its fan base early on that the band represented and fully embraced such philosophies "played a central role in their subcultural consecration" (107).

While I generally agree with Smialek's depiction of the fans' abject betrayal of Metallica post-Napster, unlike him I can-

not forgive it, condone it, or explain it as an understandable reaction to “overtly elitist” musicians such as Ulrich, who had become corrupt by evil corporate influences operating in the twentieth-century entertainment marketplace (112). Moreover, I maintain that Smialek’s admonishment of Ulrich for “protecting his own interests as an *auteur* in control of his own work” and behaving like an “artist-as genius” who is desperately holding onto “deeply imbedded” Romantic “ideals of authorship and control of one’s art” (112) is unfortunate and misguided. Such artist mockery is born of modern academic groupthink, a frightening ideological movement in our universities that has contributed to a widespread societal disrespect of copyright authors, among other evils. When viewed from the lens of this collective mentality, it is not difficult to understand why Metallica’s fans took such bitter and ongoing offense by the band’s decision to expose Napster’s collectivist business model to the light of day.

THE PURPOSE OF AUTHORSHIP IN COPYRIGHT LAW

Smialek’s brief comments on the concept of authorship in copyright law take up less than a single page of his article; however, the meaning these words convey speaks volumes. His castigation of Ulrich as an elitist musician is perfectly representative of the manner in which contemporary academics routinely decry the traditional principles of autonomy and individuality that are deeply embedded within the constitutional origins of our country, which was founded as a constitutional republic. Indeed, Article I, Section 8 of the US Constitution—commonly referred to as the Progress Clause—contains a short but important blurb that empowers and instructs Congress to enact copyright laws that benefit both authors and their audiences, explicitly recognizing that “individual expression is valuable in itself, deserving

protection” (Shapiro 1045). Pursuant to the Progress Clause, Congress may pass federal laws that afford authors exclusive rights to their works for limited times, such as the right to reproduce, adapt, distribute, display, and perform them. In step with this foundational axiom, Section 102 of the Copyright Act of 1976, set forth in Title 17 of the U.S. Code, provides federal statutory protection for “original works of authorship,” as well as ownership of a copyright, which “vests initially in the author or authors of the work.”

Translating these legal precepts into everyday parlance, the author is essentially the one who actually brings a work into being, rendering an amorphous idea into a fixed, tangible expression that is entitled to copyright protection just by virtue of its having been born. Our founding fathers recognized with a prescience unmatched by any previous system of government that the long-term economic prosperity and advancement of our country’s cultural assets was dependent on promoting “the progress of science and useful arts,” which necessitates securing these and other exclusive rights to authors who create original music and other works. As such, the author has historically been treated as the hero in the US copyright story, contributing to our massive output of educational and entertainment products—and being remunerated and incentivized to continue in this noble quest (Reilly, “Tragedy” 194). Because authors contribute to our vast collective of creative works, they should receive reward in turn for the blood, sweat, and tears attendant to the creative process, just as any other person engaged in a job or career rightly expects. Perhaps more importantly, the rest of the public that enjoys the works of authors should be happy to recognize and reward authors to continue in their noble creative endeavors by affording them control and exclusive profitability from their original works.

The impassioned sentiments expressed by Ulrich and other Metallica members with respect to their desire to own and control the musical works they create are, in fact, deep-seated in notions of personality, identity, and property ownership that far predate even the earliest copyright laws on the books in the United States and in other industrial countries.

Indeed, as I have argued in a previous article, the “romantic” notion of copyright authorship that is under fire today embraces an age-old philosophy that creative works are not only expressions of artists’ talents, but also an extension of their personality. Furthering this assumption, just as property law protects the personal belongings of individuals, copyright law aims to protect the private interests of authors, allowing them to exercise exclusive control of their intellectual products in order that they can ensure the integrity of their self-expression (Reilly, “Synergistic Society” 585). Nonetheless, despite the fact that copyright has served to protect these important individual instincts, legal scholars and other academics writing about music continue to lambast musicians for raising them in the context of a copyright infringement lawsuit. Instead, they are attempting, on a global, universal scale, to eviscerate the principles of originality, autonomy, and individualism grounded in the Age of Reason that contributed directly to the conception of modern copyright protection (Sechin 102).

By contrast, when professors teach copyright law rationally and within its proper historical context, it is not difficult to determine why the members of Metallica were so adamant about vigilantly protecting their songs from unauthorized digital downloading, nor is it likely to cause societal outrage. The research topic, therefore, that is missing from the literature published by metal music scholars is an attempt to

understand why Metallica's fans, who purportedly belong to this metal sub-society of shared interests and values, betrayed the band after Napster. Only then can the research turn to exploring the likely cultural and philosophical consequences portending the dire future of metal music when its very own fans turn their backs on their artist-heroes in such a fundamentally devastating manner.

THE RISE OF GRUNGE AND THE DEATH OF THE COPYRIGHT AUTHOR

The first place to analyze this sad state of affairs is to inquire how society came to decry the capitalistic markets and corporate structures in the entertainment industry in the post-Reagan era, ironically coinciding with the depressed, unkempt, and embarrassingly imitative hands of the grunge-rock scene, which almost wiped out the heavy metal trajectory altogether. While traditional heavy metal was founded on the same notions of autonomy and individuality that characterize our copyright law principles, the emergence of grunge rock in the 1990s witnessed the rise of Pearl Jam, Nirvana, and other bands insistent on the apology for and demise of capitalism, yet ironically, like Metallica, commercially successful in their anti-establishment messaging. Unpolished (and un-showered), grunge musicians like Kurt Cobain, who gained God-like prominence in the music industry, were unable to square their unwelcome economic global success with their political and life philosophies, resulting in tragic demise for the overall movement, which fizzled out steadily even before the decade ended. Taking the lives of at least nine prominent musicians, "the grunge death toll is arguably unlike that experienced by any other music genre" (Le Miere).

At this point, it is interesting to compare Metallica to two other highly successful pre-grunge bands that arose from the

1970s haven of heavy metal greats—KISS and Led Zeppelin. Like Metallica, both of these bands achieved sales of their albums, concerts, and merchandise to such a ludicrous extent that they were flying around in their own jet planes (in the case of Led Zeppelin) and amassing tens of thousands of dollars in side businesses, such as dolls, comic books, restaurants, and corny made-for-TV movies (in the case of KISS). Yet no KISS or Led Zeppelin fan ever turned their backs on their rock heroes in the same manner as Metallica fans did in the 1990s because they were perceived as sell-outs or corporate giants.

In fact, Susan Fast’s study of Led Zeppelin in 2001 reveals that several fans of the band who participated in interviews stated that the main reason they *love* them is because “they [are] not commercially driven” (181). This is true despite the fact that both bands were moving into producing non-traditional fan-based music that reached well beyond the confines of the then-defined cloistered metal scene. Led Zeppelin’s 1979 release of *In Through the Out Door* heralded the undeniable influence of the unfortunate upcoming new era of ’80s pop music, as Jimmy Page’s indelible and riveting guitar riffs that had been front-and-center in all previous Zep albums took a major back seat to John Paul Jones’ very groovy (yet highly un-metal) keyboards in such songs as “In the Evening” and “Carouselambra.” In a similar vein, old-school KISS fans had to endure the awkward unmasking and major commercialization of the “Lick it Up” single on MTV in 1983—an embarrassing video that is still very difficult for this fan to watch, to this day!

Nonetheless, while metalheads may have shaken their heads in disappointment with respect to these changes, neither KISS nor Led Zeppelin received the type of traitorous back-

lash, album burnings, or vast decreases in record and other sales as that experienced by Metallica in the decades to come. This is, in part, because neither band *ever* apologized for their success, nor did they tout themselves to be the altruistic and sappy songsters, hipsters, and grunge-sters that Metallica were shaping themselves up to be. Had the members of Metallica stood on their high capitalistic ground (and in their high boots) as Gene Simmons and Robert Plant did in the late 1970s, touting the “demon child” and “golden God” hero-figures that they had come to symbolize, I submit that they would still be receiving the kind of respect and hero-worship that KISS and Led Zeppelin do to this very day, despite of—and perhaps, because of—the massive success and market fortunes they amassed. Instead, because Metallica set upon this ridiculous campaign to convince fans of their self-righteous, anti-corporate, and un-materialistic posture—which eventually became increasingly unrealistic given their wide success—they backed themselves into a corner from which they could not escape. As Marshall rightly summarizes:

The problem facing Metallica was that they could not stress the financial implications of the [Napster] suit because, if they gave the message that they had even thought about commercial matters, they would undermine their artistic credibility. Ironically, this would also seriously affect their sales, as their commercial success to a great extent depends upon their artistic credibility. (8)

What an impossible and, unfortunate, place for such a successful enterprise as Metallica to find themselves in!

COLLECTIVIST IDEOLOGIES ARE KILLING COPYRIGHT (AND OUR METAL HEROES)

In short, it my opinion that Metallica fans and other metal fans unfairly and, likely, unconsciously turned against the band in the wake of its lawsuit against Napster. Why did they do this? Breaking down all the analysis on the subject, I submit that Metallica’s fans failed them for one essential reason. Fundamentally and unbelievably, they felt betrayed because their favorite band enjoyed commercial success. The resentment that ensued from this unfortunate sentiment led the once fiercely loyal fans to feel entitled to pilfer the band’s digital recordings, and then lash out when Metallica did the only rational thing to protect their investment—file a copyright infringement lawsuit.

How did these feelings of resentment, entitlement, and lack of respect for artists who create great musical and other creative works occur? I attribute it, in part, to the widespread proliferation of the bizarre notion that the “author is dead,” as promulgated by those in the academy, beginning with the French historian/post-structuralist Michel Foucault in the late ’60s. In his infamous article in the field of literary criticism, “What is an Author?” Foucault asserts that:

We must entirely reverse the traditional idea of the author. We are accustomed, as we have seen earlier, to saying that the author is the genial creator of a work in which he deposits, with infinite wealth and generosity, an inexhaustible world of significations. We are used to thinking that the author is so different from all other men, and so transcendent with regard to all languages that, as soon as he speaks, meaning begins

to proliferate, to proliferate indefinitely. The truth is quite the contrary: the author ... does not precede the works; he is a certain functional principle ... by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition [sic] of fiction.

Every university student—regardless of major—is exposed to the Foucauldian death-of-the-author philosophy as if it is a given. In the remainder of this article, however, I will explain how the dead author claptrap is directly contrary to copyright tenets, as well as the basic principles of a free and thriving society.

Note first that these precepts heralded by Foucault directly conflict with the very intent and spirit of the Copyright Act: works of creativity and originality are opposite to functional works, which are governed by the Patent Act, pursuant to a completely different structure and set of rules that protect useful inventions. Moreover, the “free manipulation” of fictional (and other original works) is clearly contrary to the exclusivity provisions in the Copyright Act—that authors should have ultimate control over creative work they produce. Regardless, Foucault goes even further, calling “for a form of culture in which fiction would not be limited by the figure of the author” and stating that, when we effectively kill the author, all writings/discourses would “develop in the anonymity of a murmur. It will not make a difference who is speaking. Others are free to appropriate the discourse for themselves.”

The result of the Foucauldian assault on authors is that our time-honored notions of individual authorship have been abnegated to this amorphous, collective notion of common,

group ownership. The assault has steadily found its way to the legal academy, as evidenced by the fact that the bulk of copyright law scholarship today demonstrates

a ‘general trend against supporting individual rights’ in favor of more collectivist approaches, which are ‘predicated on a rejection of the idea that people are really autonomous.’ According to [one copyright professor], ‘[o]ur attachment to individual property rights is interpreted as symptomatic of the individualism at the core of Western society that needs reappraisal and deconstruction.’ (Reilly, “Synergistic Society” 586-87)

Conveniently, if we deconstruct and reappraise principles of individual ownership in favor of some undefined, autonomous collective that owns all products of entertainment, others within the collective who did not create them in the fundamental sense of the word cannot steal them, but only share them with one another. Napster’s platform was, indeed, based upon this progressive ideology.

I maintain, however, that this “collectivist copyright” attitude will ultimately lead to a nihilistic, abject society. Our founding fathers understood that if artists cannot control and receive royalties for their creative works, they would eventually stop creating. Unfortunately, many up-and-coming metalhead professors, and virtually everyone in the academy teaching and writing on copyright law, have been heavily influenced by the French deconstructionist indoctrination from their high school and college professors. Such teachings contribute to the widespread mantra that “corporations

are evil” and “money is evil,” and that musicians and other creative folks like our friends in Metallica must somehow be forced to apologize for their vast success in the marketplace of ideas. Thus, it should be no surprise that the Metallica/Napster debacle in the late 1990s led to a vast chasm of animosity between the once highly successful band and its myriad of fans that, to this day, has still not been successfully bridged. While Metallica’s victory over Napster could have salvaged the musical innovativeness witnessed in the golden age of pre-grunge heavy metal, the widespread fan reaction to the lawsuit and reprisal against Metallica and others who decry the practice of file sharing served as the catalyst that steadily continues to erode that creativity.

Objectivist philosopher Ayn Rand maintains that “[a] culture, like an individual, has a sense of life—an emotional atmosphere created by its dominant philosophy, by its view of man and of existence. This emotional atmosphere represents a culture’s dominant values and serves as the leitmotif of a given age, setting its trends and its style” (*Primitive* 130). Without a doubt, the anti-textual (and anti-intellectual) philosophies of Foucault and other poststructuralist theorists, such as Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida, have contributed to a widespread cultural belief that music and other entertainment products should be available without charge. This anti-author banter has continued to culminate in the type of discourse that Smialek, and many other academics, emulate when talking about the notion of copyright authorship. This is also the mentality that led to the pervasive belief among a majority of Metallica’s fans that enabled them to adopt a cavalier and unappreciative attitude that they were somehow entitled to free music, directly in contravention to hundreds of years of copyright jurisprudence and, frankly, good common sense.

CONCLUSION: COPYRIGHT CAN SAVE THE MUSIC

Fortunately, thanks to a small handful of professors who are not afraid to fight for the principles of autonomy embraced in our constitutional doctrines, copyright is slowly but steadily regaining its individualistic feet. I hope that when enough people become educated about the realities of Internet theft, deconstructionist ideologies will no longer pervade policy decisions with respect to intellectual property and that my favorite metal bands like Metallica are once again able to celebrate their vastly creative, autonomous, and monetarily successful musical achievements. I anticipate a rejuvenation of creativity, and I desire to witness once again a few maverick, un-apologetic, in-your-face bands such as Led Zeppelin and KISS, which represent the iconoclastic musicians that all metalheads of the 70s and 80s looked up to and revered.

I also aspire to experience a reinvigorated and appreciative spirit among the fans of those bands. Indicative of a spark that may ignite such spirit is the fact that, thanks to paid streaming services such as Pandora and Spotify, the record industry has posted a steady increase in revenue since 2017 (Routley), indicating that consumers may finally be warming up to once again paying for music to keep their favorite bands in business. Also indicative of a new future trend for an enlivened spirit of authorial respect is a recent apology that a Metallica fan publicized, asking forgiveness from Lars Ulrich after having reflected for fifteen years on what the Napster lawsuit was really all about:

All these years later, I’d like to publicly apologize to Metallica, because I was definitely part of the problem. Like any fan, I was seriously looking forward to the release of “I Disappear,” and when [it was] reported

that the song was floating around Napster, I immediately ran to the family computer to install the software. My experience with downloading music up to that point was limited to WAV files I would suck down and then assign to various actions in AOL (any time I received an Instant Message, I got audio of Neil Armstrong saying, “The eagle has landed”), but I was immediately hooked on Napster. Suddenly, most all of music history was before me, and all those Ramones albums from the ‘80s that were more or less out of print at the time were suddenly available to me for free. All it took was a double-click and the patience of a monk—on my dial-up connection, it generally took 40 minutes to download a single three-minute song. “I Disappear” clocks in at 4:26, so it was an hour before I could finally press play on it. It ended up not quite being a return to form (for Metallica, that journey would come later), but it did rock pretty hard, and I was happy to have new material from one of my favorite bands. I also thought Napster was awesome, though so many of my favorite artists were rallying against it, I was filled with guilt any time I used it. But I was particularly angry at Ulrich, who went to Napster’s offices a few weeks after filing the lawsuit with the intention of delivering the names of roughly 300,000 users who had downloaded Metallica songs and demanding their accounts be terminated. I assumed I was among those rolls, as I had been en-

joying “I Disappear” (as well several live bootlegs of “Hit The Lights”). He seemed stubborn and greedy, a spoiled, aging rocker unwilling to embrace new technology in favor of yelling at clouds instead. Of course, years later, I wish we had all listened to Lars. Once people started believing music piracy was a reasonable thing to do, that toothpaste remained out of that tube forever. Napster gave me a gateway to stuff I did not have access to, but it also criminally de-valued music, a development from which the industry has never recovered (and probably never will, in all honesty). Lars was the canary in the coal mine, and everybody is worse off because we didn’t listen to him about the dangers of Napster and its ilk. (Anderson)

It is my wish that this heartfelt sentiment is a testament that more young (and old) music fans are slowly coming to appreciate the fact that a society that does not respect, support, and compensate the author-heroes of the entertainment products it enjoys is a society that is, decidedly, one without spirit. Copyright, although one of the most misunderstood laws, is both historically and morally *right* and, at the end of the day, as Rand so prophetically said, “Since man has to sustain his life by his own effort, the man who has no right to the product of his effort has no means to sustain his life. The man who produces while others dispose of his product, is a slave” (*Selfishness* 110).

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Police Body-Worn Cameras: We See What You See, But Is it Helping?

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by Elenice DeSouza Oliveira
and Regina Judge

ABSTRACT

Body-worn cameras (BWCs) are valued as useful recourses. They serve to increase police transparency and accountability, provide evidence of police-citizen interactions, and assist in police officer training. Conversely, BWC use creates grave concerns regarding privacy rights, mandatory use by police officers, and the availability of video footage to the public. It becomes clear that they are not the entire solution to the need for greater police surveillance, but are only one viable factor.

Keywords: Body-worn cameras, police technology, video footage, police-citizen interactions, transparency, privacy, surveillance

Cámaras de policía usadas en el cuerpo: vemos lo que ves, pero ¿está ayudando?

RESUMEN

Las cámaras de uso corporal (BWC) se valoran como recursos útiles. Sirven para aumentar la transparencia y la rendición de cuentas de la policía, proporcionan evidencia de las interacciones entre la policía y los ciudadanos y ayudan en la capacitación de los oficiales de policía. Por el contrario, el uso de las BWC crea graves preocupaciones con respecto a los derechos de privacidad, el uso obligatorio por parte de los

agentes de policía y la disponibilidad de secuencias de video para el público. Queda claro que no son la solución completa a la necesidad de una mayor vigilancia policial, sino un factor viable.

Palabras clave: Cámaras de uso corporal, tecnología policial, secuencias de video, interacciones entre ciudadanos y policías, transparencia, privacidad, vigilancia

警察随身摄像机：见你所见，但有用吗？

摘要

随身摄像机（BWCs）被视为有用资源。它们起到了增加警务透明度和问责，提供警方-公民互动证据，并协助警察培训的作用。相反，BWC的使用还创造了有关隐私权、警察强制使用、公众对录像片段的获取性等严峻问题。显然，BWC并不是加大警方监控力度需求的完整解决办法，而是一个可行因素。

关键词：随身摄像机，公安科技，录像片段，警方-公民互动，透明度，隐私，监控

I. INTRODUCTION

Police departments across the nation take full advantage of modern technology. From pole cameras to dashcams, law enforcement continues to utilize innovations that help them implement new surveillance strategies. One of the most promising instruments in modern policing is the body-worn camera (BWC). BWC programs have grown exponentially. “By the middle of 2016, half of the seventy largest cities

in the United States had begun using or committed to using them.”¹ New demands for the use of BWCs arose after the increase in incidents involving police brutalities like those occurring in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014, and Baltimore, Maryland in 2015. These acts of excessive force and others resulted in the rapid deployment of BWCs by patrol officers in many departments.²

Law enforcement professionals and the general public look favorably upon BWCs. They believe that the video produced will tell the entire story and eliminate all uncertainties. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that video footage from a dash-cam was the determining factor in a case involving contradictory statements by officers and civilians.³ It is foreseeable that a similar ruling will be made in favor of BWC videotape. Critics, however, question their legitimacy when they can be deactivated at an officer’s discretion or when access to controversial footage is denied. Issues surrounding privacy rights also call into question their effectiveness. The use of BWCs is a double-edged sword. They produce significant benefits while simultaneously posing severe detriments.⁴ This paper examines both the positive and negative characteristics of police BWC use.

II. POSITIVE ASPECTS OF BODY-WORN CAMERA USE

A. PRODUCES POSITIVE BEHAVIOR ON BEHALF OF OFFICERS AND CITIZENS

The use of BWCs has resulted in positive police-citizen encounters since they encourage good behavior on both sides. A study of the Rialto, California Police Department conducted from February 2012 to July 2013 included the random assignment of fifty-four officers with the Taser Axon body-camera system. It found that “[s]hifts without cam-

eras experienced twice as many incidents of use of force as shifts with cameras,” and “the rate of use of force incidents per 1,000 contacts was reduced by 2.5 times overall as compared to the previous twelve-month period.”⁵ “This dramatic reduction in the use of force indicates that BWCs may have had a “civilizing” effect on officers, as the presence of a camera appeared to drastically lower the frequency with which officers “resorted to the use of physical force—including the use of OC spray (‘pepper spray’), batons, Tasers, firearms, or canine bites.”⁶

Studies have also found that officers using BWCs initiate more contact with community members in comparison to those who are not using them.⁷ In turn, positive civilian reactions have resulted.⁸ These reactions are also produced because people are aware that they are being filmed. Some police officials believe “the visible presence of a camera [can] ... compel highly agitated people to calm down more quickly.”⁹ Members of the community are more inclined to comply with officers’ command when they are aware that their actions are being recorded.¹⁰ People tend to be less resistant to police authority in the presence of BWCs. The cameras have contributed to the creation of improved police-citizens interaction and have prevented the occurrence of situations requiring the use of force by police officers.¹¹

B. ENSURES OFFICER TRUTHFULNESS

BWC use encourages officers to be honest. Here it prevents them from “purposefully fabricat[ing] their testimony to paint a misleading picture of an event” or testilying.¹² The term “testilying” was coined by police officers to describe occasions when they lie to help convict those they perceive as guilty and avoid the consequences of the exclusionary rule.¹³ The exclusionary rule, established by the *Mapp v. Ohio*

case, prevents illegally obtained evidence from being admitted against a defendant during a judicial proceeding.¹⁴ Its purpose is to deter police misconduct. Some feel, however, that the exclusion of evidence precipitated by the rule serves as an incentive for officers to invent facts in order to render the evidence admissible.¹⁵ Use of BWC thwarts this conduct since the video provides uncontroverted proof of an actual occurrence. An example is provided in a NY case where the defendant, Gregg Allen, was charged with disorderly conduct and obstructing government administration. The arresting officers, William Gardner and John Blanco testified to Mr. Allen's criminal behavior at trial; however, their video footage told a different story. The tape exposed the officers' testimony as a fabrication and Allen was found not guilty in reliance on that footage.¹⁶

C. REDUCTION IN CITIZEN COMPLAINTS

The deployment of BWCs has significantly lowered the number of use of force complaints made against law enforcement officials.¹⁷ There was a reduction in the number of use of force complaints filed against officers assigned to wear cameras, in comparison to those not using them. This result was determined by a control-group study conducted in the Mesa Police Department in Arizona in 2012.¹⁸ The decrease in complaints is tied to the fact that officers wearing BWCs tend to act more cautiously during encounters with citizens.¹⁹ This finding is corroborated by a recent randomized controlled trial research conducted on the use of BWCs by the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD).²⁰ This study, which involved a sample of 400 officers, presented new evidence regarding the benefits of outfitting police officers with BWCs. The reduction in officer complaints has translated into a savings of manpower that was previously expended in the resolution of allegations against police offi-

cers.²¹ BWCs have served to reduce investigative costs since they reduce the amount of time spent on investigating complaints. A simple review of the videotape can confirm or contradict the alleged misconduct of an officer. It is estimated that the LVMPD's annual monetary benefits per BWC user was \$4,006.²²

D. MORE EFFICIENT RESOLUTION OF CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS

The quality of investigations conducted by police officers has also been impacted by the use of BWCs. The footage captured improves the accuracy of police reports and the collection of crucial evidence for criminal investigations.²³ Studies have also shown that BWCs reduce individuals' resistance during arrests²⁴ and increase police efficiency by reducing officers' time spent solving criminal cases and preparing paperwork.²⁵ They also increase officer productivity, as evidenced by an increase in police citations and arrests.²⁶ In addition, the availability of evidence obtained through BWC footage helps officers prepare reports in reliance on the videotape commemorating their encounter with the public, rather than on their memories.²⁷

E. IMPROVED OFFICER PROFESSIONALISM

BWCs have become powerful tools for officer training. "Recordings are used for remedial training and are also shown to correct the bad behavior of individual officers against whom misconduct allegations have been filed."²⁸ "Thus, footage is incorporated into training programs to demonstrate what actual, on-the-ground civilian encounters should (and should not) look like, and review of body-camera footage may be particularly useful in monitoring new officers."²⁹ Besides, when officers know that their superiors will periodically review their footage, it is believed that they act with more efficiency and with professionalism. The review of BWC video footage has

translated into the exhibition of higher standards of efficiency on behalf of law enforcement officers since they are sensitive to the evaluation of camera footage by their supervisors.

F. CAPTURES ACCURATE EVIDENCE FOR TRIAL

BWCs have been useful in obtaining information that may be used later during a trial and influence the decision-making of judges, prosecutors, defense lawyers, and juries. They objectively record crime scenes and preserve witness and victim statements.³⁰ Camera footage has provided crucial evidence, such as the identification of the perpetrator of a crime and corroboration of eyewitness testimony.³¹ A survey of one thousand prosecutors found that over 60 percent of them agreed that BWCs have not only increased their efficiency, but also helped the preparation of witnesses who can easily recollect the events of an incident after they review the videotape.³²

Officers' wearing of BWCs provides crucial evidence in specific types of crimes involving sensitive natures, i.e., domestic violence and intimate partner violence. These victims are often reluctant to testify against their abusers, and BWCs have facilitated the preservation of their statements in these instances.³³

BWC video has also led to increases in guilty pleas.³⁴ Uncontroverted evidence of guilt and the likelihood of conviction have caused many to accept plea deals rather than risk longer incarceration sentences after being found guilty by a jury.³⁵

III. NEGATIVE ASPECTS BODY-WORN CAMERA USE

A. SELECTIVE USE OF CAMERAS; DESTRUCTION OF FOOTAGE

BWC advocates boast of their ability to make law enforcement officers' behavior more transparent and allow for in-

creased accountability to the public. It is presumed that police officers wearing body cameras that are recording their every move will act professionally and with integrity. This is only the case, however, when the officer uses the camera at all times when on duty. "Research has concluded that those wearing cameras behaved better, and resorted to force less often, because of their awareness that they were being watched."³⁶ Officers who do not activate their cameras, however, are not motivated to behave in accordance with the law.³⁷ On the contrary, the thought that there will be no evidence of their action is an incentive to behave in ways that they know are inappropriate; freedom from observation serves to relax the bounds of professional behavior.³⁸

Some police departments provide officers with discretion when it comes to turning off their BWCs. Police officers have the option of doing so during service calls and during law enforcement-related encounters and activities, such as traffic stops, arrests, searches, interrogations, and pursuits.³⁹ The mode mechanism found on some cameras also gives officers the option of erasing what has been recorded. Cameras can be set to online mode, which automatically downloads all video footage to a remote database, or to offline mode, which allows officers the ability to pick and choose which footage they can erase.⁴⁰

The ability to discard footage or to turn off the camera negates the objective of BWCs, however. These acts create an environment ripe for abuse. Not activating BWCs or erasing footage takes away the ability to obtain an impartial video of what occurred during an encounter. "If police are free to turn the cameras on and off as they please, the cameras' role in providing a check and balance against police power will shrink, and they will no longer become a net benefit."⁴¹ Take for example, the New Orleans police officer, Lisa Lewis, who

shot an unarmed black man named Armand Bennet in the forehead. The officer had been wearing a body camera, but she disabled it before the shooting.⁴² Officer Lewis claimed that the camera was disabled at the end of her shift; however, her shift ended at 2:00 a.m. and the shooting occurred at 1:15 a.m. “Although New Orleans police recently adopted body cameras in an effort to build trust between law enforcement and the public this sort of incident demonstrates how officers can still circumvent the technology to insulate themselves from oversight.”⁴³

B. NONDISCLOSURE AND UNTIMELY DISCLOSURE OF VIDEO FOOTAGE

BWCs are used for various reasons, some of which include providing evidence of police encounters with civilians and suspects. The video footage helps illustrate both positive and negative behavior on the part of police officers and the people with whom they interact. Problems arise, however, when authorities are selective with the videos they choose to release, especially those that may display police brutality. In some cases, video only showing officers doing good deeds (saving lives, helping homeless people, etc.) are publicized, while others containing controversial content are withheld.⁴⁴

BWCs lose much of their purpose unless they are reasonably available to the public. If one accepts that a goal of the BWC is “to strengthen officer performance ... and to enhance agency transparency,” then it is inappropriate to exempt them from disclosure categorically.⁴⁵ Suspicions are legitimately raised when video footage is not released, especially those involving highly publicized incidents. “[I]n the case of police shootings, nondisclosure of dashcam videos can undermine confidence in law enforcement and the work that officers routinely perform. It can also fuel the perception that

information is being concealed—a concern that is enhanced when law enforcement officials occasionally reveal footage that exculpates officers.⁴⁶ The same is felt with the nondisclosure of BWC videos that display negative police behavior. “[N]ot making a body camera video publicly available—at least within a reasonable period of time following an incident - could lead to accusations of a cover-up of police brutality and misconduct by law enforcement and other public officials.”⁴⁷ An example involved the yearlong delay of the release of the tape capturing the shooting of Laquan McDonald in Chicago, Illinois.⁴⁸ The video proved that Officer Jason Van Dyke continually shot Mr. McDonald, even after he lay dying on the ground. The officer reported that Mr. McDonald brandished a knife and lunged at him before the officer pulling his trigger.⁴⁹ The videotape revealed that Officer Van Dyke lied.

Another shortfall occurs when law enforcement’s failure to immediately release footage creates a one-sided version of the events.⁵⁰ This leaves citizens to speculate about what happened and can lead to negative conclusions. An even bigger problem can occur when bystander video of the same incident is released on social media networks. In some instances, the bystander videos do not tell the whole story and leads to even more conjecture.⁵¹ It has been suggested that one way to ensure that BWC video footage is released in a timely manner is to take the decision-making regarding the release of videos out of the hands of law enforcement. Here, the departments themselves would have no say in what footage is or is not released to the public.⁵²

Statutory and case law provide the American public with a right to access the records of government agencies pursuant to the Federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).⁵³ While state freedom of information laws are jurisdictionally separate, they are based on federal law. Both statutory amendments and

case law have stipulated that electronic audio and visual files also qualify as government records.⁵⁴ “[Al]though it establishes a presumption of disclosure for public records, FOIA recognizes that countervailing interests in specific contexts—including law enforcement—may weigh against the interests of disclosure.”⁵⁵ Those interests related to BWCs include Exemptions 7(a) and (c),⁵⁶ which cover records that are likely to interfere with law enforcement investigations and covering records that could reasonably lead to an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.⁵⁷ While the FOIA’s broad provisions favor the disclosure of information to the public, its mandate is not absolute.⁵⁸ Courts have held that these exemptions are discretionary, allowing an agency to disclose potentially exempt information if that agency concludes that there would be no resulting harm from public disclosure.⁵⁹ In pursuit of disclosure, FOIA also flips the typical burdens of administrative law. “While an agency decision usually must be upheld unless a plaintiff demonstrates the decision was arbitrary and capricious, FOIA specifically shifts the burden to the withholding agency to sustain its action of nondisclosure.”⁶⁰

The state of South Carolina seeks to automatically exempt BWC videos from its freedom of information law in order to prohibit videotape releases. Ironically, this measure was proposed as part of an amendment to a bill requiring that all state and local law enforcement officers wear body cameras.⁶¹ It provides, “Data recorded by a body-worn camera is not a public record subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act.”⁶² Thus, instead of being subject to a presumption of disclosure like other South Carolina public records, BWC videos are only disclosed at law enforcement’s discretion.⁶³

Both Florida and Georgia regulate when footage can be accessed. Although the state of Florida provides access to cam-

era footage, recordings are only retained for 90 days, which is hardly enough time for the public to properly access and review recordings.⁶⁴ The state of Georgia deems video to be law enforcement records, thus preventing them from being accessed by the public. Critics have labeled public records restrictions a “misguided effort that is unnecessary and risks complicating existing public records laws.”⁶⁵

C. PRIVACY ISSUES

The use of BWCs presents essential privacy issues. The public’s right to know and an individual’s reasonable expectation of privacy interests must be balanced in the recording of and dissemination of videotapes.⁶⁶ There are times when one would want a BWC to record an interaction with an officer, and times when they would prefer not to have this occur for various reasons. “Officers typically encounter people during the worst moments of their lives. The presence of a camera could amplify a victim’s feelings of being violated, exposed, and vulnerable while the police come to their aid.”⁶⁷ Situations involving “the occurrence of a traumatic event, the aftermath of domestic violence, or an interview concerning sexual abuse illustrate this point.”⁶⁸ Although officer assistance is needed in those situations, a victim would not want that happenstance recorded and the video potentially being released to the public. This view extends to family members of victims as well: “... [they] won’t want to see their loved one in those [settings themselves] and certainly wouldn’t want the rest of the world to [either].”⁶⁹ It is because of these circumstances that some have called for a neutral party to step in for decision-making purposes. This entity would delineate what circumstance presents privacy concerns and therefore should not be recorded.⁷⁰ This same organization could also regulate the taping of minors in school settings. “Recently, BWCs have even begun to make their way into several states’

high schools. Unfortunately, the footage of minors would not be confidential under the Family and Educational Rights and Privacy Act, which keeps most student data held by school police private. The footage of students could, therefore, become public and negatively affect future opportunities that student might have.”⁷¹

The U.S. Constitution creates various zones of privacy; the Fourth and Fifth Amendments protect against all governmental invasions of a person’s home and private life.⁷² One would want to keep video that could produce a possible threat to a person’s reputation or dignity or cause embarrassment private.⁷³ Connection to a disturbing video could also disrupt relationships and threaten employment.⁷⁴ Granted, not everything should be filmed, to prevent personal shame or humiliation or the exploitation of sensitive images.⁷⁵ BWCs capture individuals in highly contentious and controversial actions with police. Private individuals can, therefore, face public scrutiny after any interaction with law enforcement. ⁷⁶

Some states have created policies that address privacy issues as they relate to BWCs. Florida has exempted videos taken at specific locales from being considered public records. These incidents include private homes and healthcare facilities.⁷⁷ Anyplace one would reasonably expect to be held private is covered as well. “The cost to privacy of the police use of body cameras will depend on the extent to which access to the footage is available to the public and news media, and in particular, whether it could be broadcast by a media outlet or uploaded to the Internet and indexed so that it became readily accessible by using a search engine.”⁷⁸

Storage of video touches on privacy issues as well. Police departments must safeguard the images captured on BWCs. Private individuals fear that police departments could release

sensitive recordings or sell them to third parties for a profit. Even with the appropriate safeguards, there are also concerns that someone could hack the system, or an employee could engage in misconduct to the detriment of civilians or officers in the recordings. Ultimately, the party managing the storage of the tapes must ensure that there are safeguards in place to limit delicate encounters from being released to the public. “There must also be severe consequences for employees or others who misuse the body camera recordings.”⁷⁹

D. THE COST TO MAINTAIN VIDEO COVERAGE

In addition to the purchase of BWCs, police departments must be concerned with the maintenance and storage of this technology. “Cameras can cost anywhere from \$120 to \$2000 per device, which does not include the cost associated with the maintenance of storage for the recordings.”⁸⁰ “The costs of deploying police body cameras will likely include not only the costs of the cameras, but also ancillary equipment, training in the use of the equipment, protection and storage of the video, administrative and legal costs—including responding to open records requests—and other costs related to data storage, management, and disclosure to the public.”⁸¹ “Total storage costs for police departments for the first few years of operation are often comparable to the initial investment of purchasing the cameras. During the New Orleans Police Department’s 2-year plan to purchase and operate 350 BWCs for \$1.2 million, most of the funds were earmarked toward storage costs.”⁸² An inadequate infrastructure—that is, insufficient time and resources—can preclude everyone who needs to see the video to achieve the desired benefits from being able to do so.⁸³

E. LIMITED LENS SCOPE

Another issue that must be considered is the size of the frames on BWCs. “The camera always presents a certain

point of view and a frame that includes some images also excludes others.”⁸⁴ Given the size of the camera itself, the frame is consequently small and therefore presents narrow views. “Video footage is inherently limited by its own frame of reference; it offers an incomplete perspective on events: “[F]or example, the video’s picture may not show what happened outside the camera’s view, the causation for actions shown, or what depended on ‘the camera’s perspective (angles) and breadth of view (wide shots and focus).”⁸⁵ This fact can create more ambiguity and create doubt and confusion. An example is found in the trial of Officer Jeronimo Yanez of the St. Anthony Police Department in Minnesota.⁸⁶ Officer Yanez was prosecuted for the death of Philando Castile. He was seen on tape firing seven shots into Mr. Castile at close range. “The limited scope of the footage made it difficult for jurors to determine what actually happened.”⁸⁷ They struggled with what they could not see since the patrol car with the dashcam was parked behind Mr. Castile’s car. It therefore, only showed the rear of the vehicle and the officer, not Mr. Castile. The footage made it difficult to determine whether Castile was reaching for his ID or for a gun because it did not clearly depict the front seat where Mr. Castile sat.⁸⁸ Officer Yanez was ultimately found not guilty. “Though a BWC would offer an officer’s perspective and might have made the situation clearer in the Castile shooting, BWC footage is still susceptible to multiple interpretations.”⁸⁹

IV. CONCLUSION

At first glance, BWCs seem to provide many benefits that include, “... increased transparency and accountability, improved citizen perceptions of police, more civil police-citizen interactions, evidentiary benefits in criminal prosecutions for countering claims of misconduct, and improving

police officer training.”⁹⁰ “Body cameras are a viable solution to police misconduct, and they ensure the fair and accurate administration of justice for those who pursue the aid of the court system to remedy violated constitutional rights due to allegations of excessive force.”⁹¹ Conversely, the use of body cameras present grave concerns for privacy rights, mandatory use by police officers, and the availability of video footage to the public. It becomes clear that they are not the entire solution to the need for greater surveillance, but instead are only one viable factor.

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Robert Eggers' *The Witch*: A Feminist Folktale of Fear and Floating

.....
by H. Peter Steeves

ABSTRACT

The title card of Robert Eggers' 2015 film, *The Witch*, tells us that what we are about to see is "A New England Folktale." Moving from a critique of colonialism and capitalism to an analysis of identity politics and trans-philosophy, this essay reads Eggers' film through a (mostly second-wave) feminist lens and argues that the folktale at work explains how women might free themselves from the bonds of patriarchal society by rejecting the concept of *woman* and embracing those pre- or uncivilized forces that are considered dark and transgressive by mainstream culture.

Keywords: *The Witch*; *The VVitch*; Robert Eggers; witchcraft; Andrea Dworkin; colonialism; feminism; Satan; Christianity; natural law; Brett Kavanaugh; Hillary Clinton; Donald Trump; sacrifice; Sigmund Freud; sexuality; Puritans; philosophy

***The Witch* de Robert Eggers: Un cuento popular feminista de miedo y flotación**

RESUMEN

La tarjeta de título de la película de 2015 de Robert Eggers, *The Witch*, nos dice que lo que estamos a punto de ver es "Un cuento popular de Nueva Inglaterra". Pasando de una crítica del colonialismo y el capitalismo a un análisis de la política

de identidad y la trans-filosofía, esto El ensayo lee la película de Eggers a través de una lente feminista (en su mayoría de segunda ola) y argumenta que el cuento popular en el trabajo es uno que explica cómo las mujeres podrían liberarse de los lazos de la sociedad patriarcal al rechazar el concepto de mujer y acoger a esas fuerzas pre o no civilizadas que la cultura dominante considera oscuras y transgresoras.

Palabras clave: The Witch; The VVitch; Robert Eggers; brujería; Andrea Dworkin; colonialismo; feminismo; Satán; Cristianismo; la Ley natural; Brett Kavanaugh; Hillary Clinton; Donald Trump; sacrificio; Sigmund Freud; sexualidad; Puritanos; filosofía

罗伯特·艾格斯作品《女巫》：一个与恐惧和浮动相关的女权主义民间故事

摘要

罗伯特·艾格斯2015年的电影作品《女巫》的标题卡告诉我们，我们将看到“一个新英格兰民间故事”。从对殖民主义和资本主义的批判，到对身份政治和超哲学（trans-philosophy）的分析，本文从女权主义（基本为第二次女权主义浪潮）的视角审视了艾格斯的电影，并主张，该民间故事解释了女性如何可能通过拒绝“女性”的概念和通过信奉那些远古文明或非文明力量来将自身从父权社会的关系中解放出来，而这些力量被主流文化视为黑暗或超自然力量。

关键词：《女巫》，The VVitch，罗伯特·艾格斯，巫术，安德里亚·德沃金，殖民主义，女权主义，撒旦，基督教，自然法，布雷特·卡瓦诺，希拉里·克林顿，唐纳德·特朗普，献祭，西格蒙德·弗洛伊德，性，清教徒，哲学

1. INTRODUCTION

He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites—all their sins—and put them on the goat's head. He shall send the goat away into the wilderness in the care of someone appointed for the task. The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a remote place; and the man shall release it in the wilderness.

—Leviticus 16:21-22

We are told from the start that *The Witch* (2015) is “A New England Folktale.” As such, the film is situated within a specific genre, one that traditionally has two important elements: folktales are typically meant to explain to a community something that is otherwise inexplicable, and folktales are typically passed from person to person, generation to generation, orally. Writing, after all, is one of the trappings of civilization, something we leave behind when we take off beyond the town gates as the family at the center of *The Witch* does in the first few minutes of the film. To *write* about this movie is thus to risk missing its meaning completely—and to miss the point of the inexplicable's explanation. We should be talking around a fire in the woods right now, the creatures of the shadow-world just beyond the edge of the firelight, leaning in to listen for a bit before making their horrific presence known.

2. THE STORY OF *THE WITCH*

William and Katherine, along with their daughter Thomasin (~15 years old), son Caleb (~10 years old), and young twins

Jonas and Mercy (~4 years old), are Puritans living in early-seventeenth century New England. The film opens with the elders of the Plymouth colony decreeing that William has heretical religious views and that he and his family are thus to be banished to the wilderness. The family leaves the confines of the settlement and, after what we assume is a brief journey of a few days, comes upon a clearing near a wooded area. They decide to stay, building a house and stable for their horse and goats and planting a garden (that will never bear any crops). Time passes—perhaps just under a year—and Thomasin is seen playing peek-a-boo with Samuel, a newborn addition to the family. Her hands covering her eyes during the game for just a moment, Thomasin, upon looking down, discovers that Samuel has vanished. There is no plausible natural explanation. The family imagines that a wolf (apparently an impossibly silent, speedy, efficient, and invisible wolf) might have carried the baby away, though they hold Thomasin accountable for the tragedy—especially Katherine. In a later scene, we see that a witch has abducted the unbaptized Samuel and is using his blood and entrails for magic.

Katherine is inconsolable after the loss of her infant son. The twins, oblivious to the suffering, laugh and play games, annoying Thomasin, who teases them by claiming that she is a witch and can harm them if they do not do as she says. The twins are terrified by this and behave—if only for a short while.

William and Caleb go hunting, using supplies William procured by secretly trading his wife's fancy silver cup. After an unsuccessful hunt, the family has a meager dinner and Katherine confronts Thomasin about both the disappearance of her cup and her newborn child. William and Caleb, who know the truth about the cup, allow Thomasin to take the blame. That night, William and Katherine discuss "selling"

Thomasin to another family back at Plymouth as a servant—a conversation Thomasin and Caleb overhear. Caleb, who is just on the edge of puberty, has been “noticing” his sister. He does not want her to go away. Heading out without permission to hunt on his own early the next morning, Caleb gives in to Thomasin, who insists on coming with him. Once deep in the woods, a creepy rabbit startles the horse and the family dog, Fowler, who has tagged along. Caleb chases the dog and the rabbit, eventually finding Fowler eviscerated. Continuing to follow the trail, the boy encounters what appears to be a beautiful naked woman living in a hut in the woods. As the woman pulls him close and kisses him, her arm is shown to be old and decaying: she is the witch; Caleb is surely lost. Thomasin, who has been unconscious since having been thrown by the horse, is found by her father and taken home. Katherine, now having lost two of her sons while they were with Thomasin, makes it clear that she blames her daughter for everything that has been going wrong.

Caleb wanders back home the next night in the rain, naked and unable to speak. He is clearly suffering from some great physical and mental illness—perhaps as the result of a curse. The next day he awakens, mysteriously spits up a small apple, suddenly engages in a passionate (and somewhat erotic) soliloquy in which he confesses his love for Christ, and dies. Questioning if this could be the result of witchcraft, Katherine once again turns to blame her daughter. The twins now admit that Thomasin proclaimed herself to be a witch. Thomasin responds by arguing that if anyone is engaged in witchcraft it must be the twins since they hang out with the sinister goat, Black Phillip, so much and she has even heard them having conversations with him. Thomasin further calls into question her father's ability to provide for his family. As tensions escalate, William's temporary solution is to im-

prison all three of his remaining children in the stable. Overnight, the children are visited by the witch, who breaks into the shed where they are being kept, drinks milk straight from the goats, and obviously creates havoc in scenes we are not shown. At the same time, Katherine dreams (or has a waking delusion) that Caleb has returned with Samuel—and her silver cup. She takes the baby to her bosom to breast-feed him, unaware that Samuel is actually a crow pecking violently at her bloody breast.

The next morning William goes outside and discovers Thomasin, unconscious once again and this time covered in blood. All of the goats, apart from Black Phillip, have been slaughtered, the stable is in shambles with a large hole in the roof, and the twins are now nowhere to be seen. Thomasin is the only child that remains. Outraged, befuddled, and defeated, William stands passively overlooking the scene ... and is promptly gored by Black Phillip. He considers fighting back with an axe, but gives in to death, muttering, “Corruption, thou art my father,” before being pushed by Black Phillip into a towering stack of firewood that falls and crushes him. Katherine emerges from the house and lets her full fury fly at her daughter. She now claims that Thomasin was trying to seduce her brother and father and is to blame for everyone’s death. She begins beating her daughter, even trying to strangle her. Thomasin fights back, ultimately using a cleaver to kill her mother.

Night comes. Thomasin, it seems, has been in shock most of the day. Black Phillip leads her into the stable and she calmly follows. Thomasin begs Black Phillip to speak to her. The goat, now seen in the shadows to be a man dressed in elegant black clothing—though we only ever catch glimpses of him in passing from the waist down—begins the following exchange with the girl:

Black Phillip: What dost thou want?

Thomasin: What canst thou give?

BP: Wouldst thou like the taste of butter? A pretty dress? Wouldst thou like to live deliciously?

T: Yes.

BP: Wouldst thou like to see the world?

T: What will you from me?

BP: Dost thou see a book before thee? Remove thy shift.

T: I cannot write my name.

BP: I will guide thy hand.

Thomasin signs, shift-less and naked, and is soon led into the forest by Black Phillip in goat form. She finds an entire coven of witches there, chanting around a fire. As the witches begin floating up into the sky, Thomasin smiles, welcomed into the group, and rises up into the trees.

3. ON COLONIALISM AND CUPS

It is surely the case that part of what has pushed William beyond the town's gates, putting the film's narrative in action, is his disagreement with the church elders about how best to live according to Scripture. This is a problem that really only shows itself when Scripture is written down. When words are on a page, when there is a physical Bible, those words seem to linger, to have a life of their own. You read the words, close the book, open the book back up, and still the words are there—as if they never left, as if they kept on meaning something exact and precise even when you weren't reading them.

When we have written words, we start to worry about *literal interpretations* and who understands the words the closest to the sense in which they were *first written down*. This worry is much harder to find in oral cultures. Because words, then, are only there when we use them to talk to each other, it is more clearly the case that words have their meaning in particular moments and contexts, for particular people and times, before evaporating. And because our memories are not without fault, when we retell our stories we do not expect the words to stay the same. Instead, we realize that language does not denote, does not point to some truth beyond itself, but instead is just a way of us getting along, of us being an *us* by sharing ideas and history. So the problem of the Puritans—and of William, who seems to be too puritanical for even the Puritans—is a problem that is rooted in the written word. The move to the forest is a move to the oral.

When we ask what it is that this folktale is trying to explain, let us then not get caught in the trap of arguing about a literal versus metaphorical interpretation of the film, as if either there really is a talking goat and a witch, or these things are mere symbols representing other things. Both are true and yet neither is sufficient at the same time. There is no such thing as a literal reading—to experience is to interpret—yet not all interpretations are useful or meaningful in the same way.

Part of the mythology of colonialism is that the colonizer moves from safety, comfort, and civilization to danger, horror, and nature. One way to understand what is going on in the film, then, is to see it through a colonialist lens. Leaving England, so goes the thinking, is leaving safety. The colony is a place in the middle of a dangerous wilderness populated by heathens. To be banished from the colony is thus a double horror: it is to leave England *and* New England.

We glimpse Native Americans only briefly in *The Witch*. They look at the wagon as William and his family leave town, and we see them from the perspective of those in the wagon. In other words we take up the viewpoint of the colonizers. Following the gaze of the Native traders, we are forced to remember that it only *appears* that William and his family are moving out into Indian territory because the truth is that the whole white colony is already on Indian territory. They—we—always already were the interlopers, those who left England for supposed freedom, only to reinscribe the values of empire and intolerance in *New England*. When the members of William's family talk about *home* later in the movie, they mean England, not the Plymouth colony. Katherine dreams of returning; Thomasin has fond memories, surprised that Caleb's are so dim. The twins would have *no* memories of that home. And baby Samuel—the only member of the family born *here*, born outside of England—has already been completely absorbed by the new world, disappearing into it within the first minutes of the film.

Katherine's silver cup is thus not only a symbol of William's betrayal, but a remnant of the empire in which they still participate—a link to a culture that exists only by means of its own sort of witchcraft. For how does silver achieve its value if not by some sort of spell cast on everyone within a culture, making them think it has worth, that it can be traded for food, clothing, and other items that *actually* sustain life? Gold, silver, and money itself have their economic import by means of a mass bewitching—capitalism and empire being the true conjurers that use us up until our bodies turn into the somatic paste of blood, bones, and tears that oils the machinery of civilization. Let us say, then, that one way of looking at the film is as a tale told by a culture—our culture—that knows it has done something horrible but cannot quite come

to terms with it. Knows, that is, that the forest, and those who dwell there, deserve to win.

We might also think about the way in which Biblical motifs are at work in the scheme of things. The family's little homestead seems to be set in an ironic Eden—a natural world where nothing is in balance and all they can do is long for apples to *save* them. The hunt and the domestic crops have failed. William and Caleb speak of finding apples to take home to eat, saving the family and satiating everyone's hunger. When Caleb returns from his encounter with the witch and spits up a bloody apple, it is thus both symbolic of a lie he has told for his father earlier, covering for him by not letting Katherine know the true story behind the silver cup, and it is meaningful because everyone is on the verge of starving. But perhaps most importantly it is a reminder of the apple that "Eve" fed him—and with this single scene in the film we are led to remember that our traditions cast Eve as the first witch, bedeviling Adam and corrupting him with sex and knowledge. From the start, what it means to be a woman has been to be a witch.

4. WITCHES, SEX, AND GOD'S RAVAGINGS

That the first woman is also the first witch makes sense in a culture founded on misogyny. As Andrea Dworkin has argued,¹ the figure of the witch has historically been used as a category for women who tempt men to think and act sexually, and since the category of "woman" only exists as a sexual category in the patriarchy, this is to say that all women are witches.

Ecclesiasticus 25:19 tells us that "All wickedness is but little to the wickedness of a woman" And from a fifteenth cen-

1 See especially, *Intercourse*.

ture Catholic document entitled "The Witches' Hammer" (*Malleus Maleficarum*), we get such glosses as:

When a woman thinks alone, she thinks evil [D]evils do ... things through the medium of women and not men They [i.e., women] have slippery tongues, and are unable to conceal from their fellow-women those things which they know through their evil arts. And since they are weak, they find a secret and easy manner of vindicating themselves by witchcraft Since they are feebler both in mind and body, it is not surprising that they should come more under the spell of witchcraft. For as regards intellect, of the understanding of spiritual things, they seem to be of a different nature than men But the natural reason is that she is more carnal than a man, as is clear from her many carnal abominations. And it should be noted that there was a defect in the formation of the first woman, since she was formed from a bent rib, that is, a rib of the breast, which is bent as it were in a contrary direction to a man. And since through this defect she is an imperfect animal, she always deceives. (Kramer and Sprenger 2000, 43-44)

A couple of centuries and one Reformation later, nothing much has changed.

Thomasin, whether she knows it or not, is thus always going to be a witch in this culture. When Caleb stares at Thomasin's breasts, it is thus somehow *her* fault; she is already in league

with Satan when she innocently cradles Caleb to her bosom and Caleb gets excited. When the boy later meets the witch of the woods, he knows he should not be doing what he's doing—he should not be approaching this stranger in the dark forest—but he “cannot help it.” After all, she's “hot.”

Explaining away a male's choice by pretending it is a lack of agency due to his being bewitched in the presence of a female body is a recipe for violence and real-life horror. It is an implicit excuse for assault, part of the same worldview that *normalizes* violence done to women. As a reminder that nothing has changed, we need only look at the hearings held during the summer of 2018 on Brett Kavanaugh's potential appointment to the Supreme Court. At the time, multiple women had come forward to say that they had been sexually assaulted by Kavanaugh, but the nominee merely expressed anger at the accusations, claiming that he liked to drink and attend parties but was sure he never did anything wrong; he could not recall any of the incidents about which the women were talking, and thus they were all lying (see above: “She always deceives”). As my wife, Danielle Meijer, brilliantly said to me, “I *believe* he truly doesn't remember doing anything to these women. Because if he did it, for him these moments wouldn't have stood out as anything special, anything different, anything even *worth* remembering. Rape at a fraternity party is just another Saturday night.” What it means to normalize violence against women is to fail to see acts of violence against women, and to fail to believe women that something has happened. On October 2, 2018, Brett Kavanaugh was sworn in as the 114th Justice of the United States Supreme Court.

One of the things that Eggers does so effectively in this movie is point us toward the complicated relationships the Puri-

tans had to power and sexuality, and thus the complicated political relationships that continue today. We might wonder why Katherine, as a *woman*, does nothing to help her daughter. In fact, Katherine is probably Thomasin's greatest enemy. Shortly before Thomasin kills her mother in self-defense, Katherine is screaming at her, "You bewitched thy brother, proud slut! And your father next. Did you not think I saw thy sluttish looks to him, bewitching his eye as any whore?" The patriarchy thrives, in part, because like most successful systems of oppression, it manages to get those who are worst off to turn against each other. The patriarchy has had years of insidious practice in coaxing women to fight each other, thus making them unable to get together and organize thea revolution. Katherine has fully defined herself in terms of her relationships to men: as a "shrewish wife" and a "grieving mother" to two lost boys. When the witch shows her what this relationship in part really means—when a raven pecks at Katherine's breasts until she bleeds—Katherine can only see this as a nurturing act; she can only see herself as mother, and motherhood as sacrifice, and sacrifice (to sons) as being good. As the apparent source of this vision, the witch is doing Katherine a favor, trying to teach her a feminist lesson about the nature of motherhood under a patriarchy. But Katherine is too far-gone to be able to see. Class is in part to blame. Katherine no doubt imagines that her only hope to return to England and a life of "luxury" is to serve her husband and sons well. Thus, the fact that Katherine is just as frightened of Thomasin's sexuality as the men in the house is no surprise.

Identity politics began with some good intentions and insights: there are experiences that are cut off to me, for instance, because I do not go through life in a body that can get pregnant. I cannot speak in any deep way for someone who

can. But on the flip side, being a woman does not necessarily make one a feminist. The larger systems of oppression in which we participate have such incredible power. While in 2020, we currently have an horrific more-or-less self-proclaimed misogynist in the White House in the form of Donald Trump, had Hillary Clinton won the electoral college in 2016, we would still not have had a feminist there. As First Lady, Senator, and Secretary of State, Clinton used her positions of privilege to bomb women and children, support a military coup in Honduras that has (among other horrible things) led the murder rate of LGBTQ Hondurans to increase by a factor of 35, fight against minimum wage increases that would have proportionally helped *women* around the world, and (in the mid 1990s) help dismantle the U.S. welfare system to the detriment of women (and women of color) especially. When Katherine calls Thomasin a “proud slut” and all but demands her own daughter be burned at the stake, we know that true feminism is not merely about having a biological woman in a position of power.

This all just gets messier when God is thrown in the mix. Katherine tells us that she was “ravaged” by God when she was Thomasin’s age. It’s an interesting choice of words to describe a young woman entering puberty and desiring a relationship with God—a relationship that she likens to one better than any she could have had with a husband. And when Caleb has his “sexy Jesus” moment before dying in bed, he, too, seems *ravaged*: panting in short and lusty breaths about God’s sweet kisses and embraces. Overwhelmed by God’s love, he appears to climax, and then dies. And as usual, this is all very much a male conception of sex—sex as necessarily forceful, penetrative, overwhelming, madness inducing, and inherently violent.

5. CONCLUSION: BLACK PHILLIP, A TRANS FEMINIST ALLY IN THE SABBATH ABOVE THE TREES?

What does a woman want?

– Sigmund Freud in Ernest Jones'
Sigmund Freud: Life and Work

It has become a horror film trope to speak of a virginal “final girl.” In such films as the original *Halloween* (1978), *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984), and *Friday the 13th* (1980), women who are sexually active die early and gruesomely, apparently paying for their carnal sins, while the “pure” girl is saved. Thomasin is, indeed, saved in *The Witch*. But not in the normal sense. And here, again, Eggers handles this brilliantly.

One needn't be Sigmund Freud to see that Caleb and his father going into the woods with a huge phallic gun that ultimately backfires on them is a comment on the fears of failed masculinity. Or that William's general impotence as a patriarchal *man* is constantly exhibited in the fact that he cannot hunt or grow food and seems to be good at only one thing: chopping and stacking wood (of course, when Black Phillip gores him, William tumbles into the wood and is buried under it—showing us how all the manly work of Man has always been for naught). No, what is truly remarkable is that Eggers ingeniously weaves together a story that is so nuanced and rich in meaning that we have what I would argue is a new point of view on how the patriarchy goes wrong and how women might yet prevail.

Consider the central question of the film: “What dost thou want?” It is, of course, a twist on Freud's classic question (and admission of his ignorance). It is also the opening in Black Phillip's dialogue with Thomasin. But it appears one oth-

er place in the movie as well. It is what William screams at Katherine when they are arguing about whether or not he'll go to the village for help. Exasperated with his wife, William yells, rather than whispers, in patriarchal rage, "What dost thou want?!" Katherine really just wants to go back to England. In response to Black Phillip's phrasing of the question, though, Thomasin wants something else—something more. She wants to live deliciously. She wants all of the things not usually afforded to women, especially women of her class but also women in general. And so she agrees to a bargain. Satan guides her hand, but she signs her name in his book: *Thomasin*. And in so doing, she gives up her name, signs away her name, and leaves behind the world of men.

But what's in a name anyway, especially when it is just a marker of male property? "Thomasin" is the female version of "Thomas"—even her name is just a man's name (with "sin" added!). "Thomas" itself is Aramaic in origin. It means "twin." Unless you are very up on your Scripture, you might not remember that Jesus originally had two apostles named Judas, so he renamed one "Thomas" to differentiate him from Judas Iscariot. "Thomas," then, is not even a birth name; it is the marker for a twin to the betrayer of Christ. Why wouldn't Thomasin wish to sign away her name?

But here's the real question: can this ultimately be a *feminist* story, if liberation requires a male—if Satan takes the form of a male goat, and then a male human at the end, to whom the woman must make a sacrifice? Without this powerful *man*, would Thomasin have been freed?

Here's where Eggers' work is truly revolutionary.

Such a worry would hold for most stories of satanic pacts. If a man, even in the form of the devil, is the only path to saving

women, then it is hard to see how the story can truly be empowering for women. But there is a fascinating way in which the devil in the guise of Black Phillip is different: perhaps a “male ally,” though he, himself, is not even traditionally *male* in the classic patriarchal sense. For lack of a better word, let us call him *trans*. After all, he is utterly marginalized; he is part animal; he doesn't care about adhering to man-made categories; he is pregnant with an almost feminine power to create; he likes hanging out with women but apparently does not have any interest in them sexually. His command for Thomasin to remove her clothing is creepy, but not in a Harvey Weinstein sort of way. It is creepy because he is speaking from the shadows and he is, well, Satan: creepiness is sort of his shtick. And after all, under one reading, Lucifer himself was a victim of the ultimate patriarch, God. Once a beloved angel who loved and was loved *by* God, Lucifer one day decided that he wanted to share some of the power in heaven and participate in the act of creation, and for that (somewhat reasonable?) demand, was cast into eternal darkness and damnation. Black Phillip, then, has been punished by *his* father and has fallen as low as one can fall, and so decides to do his own thing rather than play by the rules of the old game. What could be more *transgressive*?

In the end, it is the norm in the West that stories are about men and male values. The hero's journey, the self-discovery narrative, the earning of honor, the protagonist who must be redeemed or saved—these are boys' stories about boys' worries. From Homer to Shakespeare to Hemingway to Joyce, what we think of as *real literature* is usually about what happens to men, and how we need to root for them or feel sorry for them—or both. As in a patriarchal family, where the fate of everyone is decided by the fate of the father, so in a patriarchal *society*, the fate of everyone is decided by the fate

of these men. At the start of *The Witch*, William's religious beliefs don't just get *him* cast out of the town; they get the whole family banished. And William's inability to hunt and grow food leads to *everyone* being on the verge of starvation. And so, on a first viewing, we might expect that the film's narrative will continue this way—as countless narratives in the past have done—with everyone's fate decided by whether or not William can succeed and be redeemed. Think about everyone dead on the stage-floor at the end of “Hamlet,” all because a brooding boy has dead-daddy issues. Think about *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), where every single person in the castle is cursed because the Beast alone was a jerk, and how they will only be set free if this one man can be redeemed—which means that some woman will have to see past all of his faults and still love him, blah blah blah. At most, a woman's place in these stories is to bear the burden of loving a man, to care for men, even when they are immature and violent and self-centered and full of hubris. The lesson is: only then, when these poor, flawed, but ultimately redeemable and glorious men are okay, will everyone else be okay.

How revolutionary is it when Eggers doesn't give us this story? How revolutionary is it when Thomasin calls out her father's faults with disdain rather than lovingly follow him to their mutual tragic end? How revolutionary is it that Thomasin will learn to thrive without her father thriving—that she'll achieve her loftiest position only when he is dead on the ground?

Early in the film, the witch is seen covering herself and her broom in the blood of baby Samuel. A broomstick-staff is the ultimate phallus: put it between your legs and you have power. And the witch—covering hers in blood, the castration image plain and clear—has thus ripped apart the patriarchy's source of control. The manipulation of a broom is, further-

more, the woman taking a powerful image of her *domestic* work and turning it into something even more powerful that frees her from the home.

The ability to fly is not only a sign of a woman's identification with Nature, but also an overcoming of the male-founded *laws* of Nature. From now on, the witch will make her own way in the world, unencumbered by Man's enforcing of law and order. This is, after all, the era of the European Enlightenment. At the same time the events in the film are taking place in New England, Galileo is being found guilty of heresy by the Inquisition in Europe, forced into house arrest for suggesting, in essence, that rational laws (rather than the will of God) rule the cosmos. The Enlightenment is just getting off the ground, although it will always be tethered down by laws of one sort or another. The ultimate patriarch is still in charge; he will soon be dethroned by the equally patriarchal scientists who are emerging. In both cases, women fare the same, their way of being-in-the-world considered *unlawful* by the men in control. Thus, whether gravity be governed by God's will or an equation reasoned out by Isaac Newton and other men of his kind, to think that one might be able to violate such a law is to think that one might not be subject to the rule of the patriarchs. These, then, are the ultimate laws to overcome, their destruction the ultimate symbol of female revolution. Above the trees, gone are not only the political laws inscribed by men that held women down for ages, but so, too, the natural laws of the absolute patriarch that held women down on the ground *literally*.

But there is no "literally" anymore, even if there is a new-found conception of good and bad, right and wrong. And it is thus that Thomasin achieves her truly lofty and transformative position. She removes her shift: civilization, the patriarchy, the nuclear family, and adherence to the moral, legal,

and natural laws of Man—all are stripped away. She teams up with the other women of the woods. She smiles for the first time in earnest. And there, above the trees, she floats.

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Entertainment as Education: Multiculturalism and Interculturalism in Eytan Fox's 2004 Film

Walk on Water

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by Erika Engstrom

ABSTRACT

This article demonstrates how Israeli director Eytan Fox's 2004 film *Walk on Water* (*Lalechet Al Ha-Mayim*) can be utilized to teach concepts of multiculturalism, interculturalism, and intercultural communication competence. A textual analysis of the film's visual and dialogic content demonstrates how narrative and aesthetic elements, such as those in *Walk on Water*, provide viewers cognitively and emotionally provocative stories that promote the pro-social goals of intercultural communication.

Keywords: *Walk on Water*, Eytan Fox, Israeli film, interculturalism, multiculturalism

El entretenimiento como educación: multiculturalismo e interculturalidad en la película *Walk on Water* (2004) de Eytan Fox

RESUMEN

Este artículo identifica cómo la película *Walk on Water* (*Lalechet Al Ha-Mayim*) de 2004 del director israelí Eytan Fox se puede utilizar para enseñar conceptos de multiculturalismo, interculturalismo y habilidad de comunicación intercultural. Un análisis textual del contenido visual y dialógico de la pelí-

cula demuestra cómo elementos narrativos y estéticos como los de *Walk on Water* proporcionan a los espectadores historias provocativas cognitivas y emocionales que promueven los objetivos pro-sociales de la comunicación intercultural.

Palabras clave: *Walk on Water*, Eytan Fox, cine israelí, interculturalismo, multiculturalismo

寓教于乐：伊藤·福克斯2004年电影《水中漫步》中的多元文化主义与跨文化主义

摘要

本文研究了以色列导演伊藤·福克斯2004年拍摄的电影《水中漫步》（阿拉伯语又名Lalechet Al Ha-Mayim）如何能被用于教授多元文化主义、跨文化主义、跨文化传播能力等概念。一项关于该电影视觉内容和对话内容的文本分析证明了，例如在《水中漫步》中出现的叙事元素和审美元素，如何给观众带来引起认知和情感方面的故事，这些故事能推动跨文化传播的亲社会目标。

关键词：《水中漫步》，伊藤·福克斯，以色列电影，跨文化主义，多元文化主义

Beyond their entertainment value, popular films provide educators with what Champoux described as an “excellent medium for giving meaning to theories and concepts” (211) through visual and auditory effects that keep students’ interest. By reifying such abstractions via storytelling that evokes emotive responses from viewers, movies thus

offer both cognitive and affective experiences (Champoux), which can often stay with the viewers beyond traditional lecture content. In higher education, the use of movie clips or entire filmic works have been found to serve as effective tools to teach students across a range of levels and disciplines, including history (Weinstein), international relations (Engert and Spencer), medicine (Alexander, Hall, Pettice; Lumlertgul, Kijpaisalratana, Pityaratstian, and Wangsaturaka), nursing (Wilson, Blake, Taylor and Hannings), and social work (Lee and Priestler).

Briam, citing others, noted that although fictional films aren't "real life," they do lead us back to it (see also Tidwell). When actual observation and immersion in cultures other than one's own may be limited or unfeasible, movies oftentimes serve as stand-ins; they "simulate the natural observation process" (Cardon 151) that happens when one encounters other cultures. Thus, literature and film hold the potential for understanding intercultural relations, themes, and how characters resolve conflicts stemming from cultural differences. Condon further explains that literature "allows for more varied points of view, more emotional involvement, and the taking of a stand on issues" (Cardon 153). Indeed, when one considers the goals of intercultural education, the advantages of using entertainment that engenders similar goals, such as mutual understanding and intercultural competence, "we need to utilize more full the power of the image and word in our understanding of intercultural communication" (Condon 153).

In this vein, this paper addresses the ways in which Israeli director Eytan Fox's 2004 film *Walk on Water* (*Lalechet Al Ha-Mayim*), about an Israeli Mossad agent who goes undercover to find the Nazi grandfather of two German siblings, offers a venue in which to explore concepts associated with intercultural education. Specifically, the purpose of this pa-

per is to demonstrate how this film illustrates multiculturalism and interculturalism, concepts related to the study of intercultural communication. Multiculturalism refers to “the recognition and celebration of cultural differences” (Morrison and Chung 165). Interculturalism moves beyond recognition of difference in that changes created by increased interconnectness of people across the globe. As Cantile explains on the website “About Interculturalism,” interculturalism “demands interaction between and within cultures to build trust and understanding” with an additional caveat that “a high level of cultural navigational skills will be necessary for people to accept and endorse the change process.”

Interculturalism requires both tolerance of diversity *and* interaction with other cultures (Casoni and Gindro). The need to interact with others outside our own cultures in turn requires competence in intercultural communication. Weinstein pointed to film as a “comfortable, nonthreatening” (30) medium that appeals to students, whom he observed have become more visually oriented. In the context of using popular movies to spur conversations and reflections about intercultural issues such as racism, stereotyping, and prejudice, films provide a site removed from discussants and allows for talking about films and their characters rather than themselves. Indeed, a plethora of research utilizing popular films in intercultural communication education efforts attests to the power of entertainment to educate in this vein, with the foci of the films examined in these academic works largely aimed at the U.S. market (Briam; Cardon; Lee and Priester; Pandey and Ardichvili; Tidwell; Villalba and Redmond).

When approaching the topic of intercultural communication, however, even as “other” cultures are portrayed, they in the main are comparisons to some form of “American” culture. In that, as Weinstein observed, the use of films in teach-

ing serves as an chance to “expand the cultural palette of students” (31), the Israeli film *Walk on Water* offers a pathway into the appreciation of “foreign” films, while simultaneously illustrating terms and theories relevant to the instruction of intercultural communication. This article thus examines how *Walk on Water* illustrates a celebration of diversity and the beneficial outcomes of interculturalism as it forwards pro-social values, such as acceptance and empathy—those values that mark what Condon described as the goal of intercultural communication studies itself: “change through understanding, most especially of self-understanding” (154).

WALK ON WATER (LALECHET AL HA-MAYIM)

Set mainly in Israel and Germany, *Walk on Water* (2004) stars popular Israeli actor Lior Ashkenazi as Eyal, a Mossad assassin who befriends a German brother and sister, Axel (Knut Berger) and Pia Himmelman (Carolina Peters), in order to find their grandfather, a Nazi war criminal. As he befriends Axel, a “peacenik,” Eyal embarks on a personal journey that leads him to a new life and worldview. The film opens with Eyal calmly and coolly carrying out an assassination in front of the target’s family during a boat excursion in Istanbul, Turkey. When Eyal returns home to Israel, he discovers the body of his wife, who has committed suicide. As a means of giving Eyal a reprieve from another assassination assignment, Eyal is tasked with what his boss considers an “easy” job: go undercover, befriend the German siblings, and find their grandfather. Eyal poses as a tour guide hired by Pia, who has moved to Israel and lives on a kibbutz, to take the visiting Axel sight-seeing around Israel.

The interactions between Eyal and Axel explore their seemingly vast differences— national, cultural, and personal. Eyal’s prejudices against Germans, homosexuals, and Palestinians

are challenged by Axel, who is German, gay, and expresses empathy for Palestinians. Axel and Pia take an overnight visit to Tel Aviv escorted by Eyal. At the restaurant where they have a fancy dinner, Axel asks their waiter, an Arab named Rafiq, where to go to enjoy the nightlife. At a gay dance club recommended by Rafiq, it dawns on Eyal that Axel is gay. Axel and Rafiq “hook up,” and the next day Rafiq takes Axel to his uncle’s shop in a Palestinian town south of Jerusalem. Eyal becomes angry when he thinks that Axel is overcharged by the uncle for a coat, and makes the man lower his price. As the group leaves, Rafiq tells Eyal that Israelis never seem to forgive what has happened to them in the past. Eyal cuts him off, but Rafiq still politely thanks Eyal for the ride.

When Axel’s visit is over, he invites Eyal to visit Berlin, despite what happened at the shop. Eyal rebuffs the offer. However, Eyal is directed to visit Axel in Berlin as part of his mission to find Axel’s grandfather. His task changes from bringing the old man back to Israel to assassinating him. While in Berlin, Eyal and Axel enjoy some street food, a drink at a bar, and run into a group of Axel’s friends, dressed in drag, in the subway. As Eyal and Axel leave the subway, Axel’s friends are attacked by some neo-Nazi thugs; the two return to defend the group and Eyal pulls a gun on the attackers, which reveals his perfect use of German to tell them to stop and the very fact that he has a gun (jeopardizing his cover). Axel, while surprised at this, nevertheless invites Eyal to his family estate for his father’s birthday party—which unbeknownst to him turns out to also be a homecoming for his Nazi grandfather.

When Eyal eventually finds the room where the elderly grandfather, in obviously failing health, is sleeping, he prepares to complete the assassination via poison. He abruptly stops and leaves the room, unable to kill yet again. Rather, it

is Axel who completes the job—a metaphor for Germany to reject its Nazi past. Axel then finds Eyal, who says he can't kill anymore. Eyal breaks down, weeping as Axel holds him. In the next scene, "TWO YEARS LATER" appears on the screen. The viewer listens to Eyal's voiceover as he writes an e-mail to Axel describing a dream he had about them both walking on water. The viewer learns that Eyal has left the Mossad and has an infant son; he has found another life, one that centers on peace and starting a family of his own—with Pia. The film concludes with a new family configuration in which Eyal and Axel literally become brothers, one that serves as a metaphor for peace and reconciliation.

The film was shot with a reported budget of \$1.4 million (Feinstein), and took in \$4.4 million worldwide (Box Office Mojo). While not a record breaker in Israel, its international sales made it the highest grossing Israeli film at that time (Hagin). Media coverage addressed director Eytan Fox's own background as U.S.-born but Israeli raised (Fox), and his gay identity and relationship with the film's screenwriter, Gal Uchovsky (Feinstein). Many Israeli critics, noted Hagin, found that the film had too many faults, especially the implausible happy ending and the non-credible portrayal of Eyal as a Mossad agent. Reviews in U.S. media outlets ranged from rather unenthusiastic (Gonzalez; Felperin; Kemp), to more positive (Austerlitz; Becker; Garret; Korevsky; Stevens; Turan). Garret concluded that the film "offers pleasure and insight, including the pleasure of insight as it explores family, politics—the relationship between Germans and Israeli Jews, and the possibilities for friendship, love, and sex." *The New York Times'* Stevens noted that, despite its "cloying" conclusion, the film's "quiet intelligence sneaks up on you" (E13).

As an entrant in several film festivals, such as the Toronto Film Festival and Outfest in Los Angeles (Vlessing), and the Ber-

linale international film festival (Hagin), it won or was nominated for several awards in Israel and abroad. These included Israeli Film Academy nominations for best director, actor, and screenplay and awards for best music and sound. It was nominated for best foreign film by the French César Awards, the St. Louis Film Critics Association's best foreign language film, and outstanding film in limited release for the GLAAD Media Awards, and won the audience award at the Washington Jewish Film Festival and the National Board of Review's award for top foreign film ("Awards—*Walk on Water*").

Academic treatments have addressed the film's content and implications from several angles and disciplines. Hagin critiqued the film's portrayal of the "weeping male" trope in Israeli films, which ties suffering to Israeli identity. Approaching the film through the lens of German victimhood discourse, Seidel-Arpaci examined the effects of historical trauma as experienced by the characters of Eyal, Axel, and Pia, noting that "the German siblings' suffering and their emotional rescue of Eyal—and thus Israel—is equally at the heart of the narrative" (213). Yosef similarly examined how overcoming the trauma of the Holocaust served as a means by which to re-imagine Israeli masculinity through the Eyal character ("Phatasmatic Losses"). Regarding the interconnectedness between Israel and Germany, Baer unpacked the symbolism of the physical setting of certain scenes, such as Eyal and Axel's confrontation with the neo-Nazi thugs in the Berlin subway. Richelson included the film in an analysis of movie portrayals of Mossad. Notably, several works cite and explain the film within the context of its director's *oeuvre* (Yosef, "Homonational Desires") as well as Israeli cinema in general (Ofengenden).

Beyond the socio-political and national identity aspects imbed in the film, other treatments of the film offer yet addi-

tional alternative readings. Kokin analyzed the theological aspects of the film. The scene at the end of the film depicting Eyal's dream that he and Axel were walking on water together served as "an astounding moment in Israeli cinema: the joint reenactment of one of Jesus' greatest miracles by German and Israeli protagonists" representing "the personification of Yahweh walking on water alongside Christ" (Kokin 375). Viewing the film through the eyes of a psychotherapist, Tyminski's optimistic approach considered the interpersonal communication between the two main characters, with the Axel character serving a therapeutic role to the emotionally closed-off Eyal: "This film, along with its seductive musical score, stands alone as an intriguing and gripping story to be recommended for viewing, Yet, it may also give analysts and psychotherapists an unusual view into the complex intersections of history, trauma, repression, and, in particular, masculinity," he concluded (101).

As an indication of *Walk on Water's* "teachable" moments, the American Zionist Movement's (AZM) movie guide, available online, offers a viewing "roadmap" with which to critically analyze the film. The guide includes explanations of the historical events and context related to the film, such as the Holocaust, and the film's setting during the Second Intifada. The Second Intifada refers to the period of heightened violence between 2000 and 2005 that followed failed peace talks between Israel and the Palestinian territory (Hasan) and in which "over 1,000 Israelis died from terrorism and in military operations, while over 3,000 Palestinians civilians and militants were killed, mostly at the hands of Israeli forces" (Byman). AZM's movie guide also explains aspects of Israeli culture and national identity, such as gender roles in Israeli society and Israeli attitudes toward Germans. The movie guide concludes with a "critical analysis" section that

explains how the narrative leads to a denouement in which Eyal “develops the ability to see people as individuals and not merely as representations of the larger movements and forces at work in the world” (47).

METHOD

Approaching the current inquiry via a textual analysis of the film available on DVD with English subtitles, the author was familiar with the film and had screened it several times during the teaching of an intercultural communication course prior to another viewing for the purposes of this study. Using multiculturalism and interculturalism as organizing concepts, the author noted references to and geographic settings filmed, music soundtrack and music actually listened to by the characters, depiction of food eaten, portrayal of characters and their cultural representation, and languages used in interactional dialogue. These visual and audio elements served as categories for evidence of multiculturalism through depictions of diversity and cultural differences based on geography, music, cultural identity of characters, languages spoken, and food.

Interactions between characters served as material for identifying interculturalism and related concepts in intercultural education, particularly prejudice and stereotyping and qualities of intercultural communication competence. Eyal and Axel’s interactions and relational development related to interculturalism, with the film’s conclusion serving as evidence for its goals. Examples of prejudice and stereotyping were based on Eyal’s dialogue with his fellow Mossad agents and supervisor, in addition to scenes in which he manifests his prejudices, such as the argument at Rafiq’s uncle’s shop. Following descriptions of the film’s multicultural and inter-

culturalist elements, the effects of interculturalism in regards to the film's denouement are discussed.

MULTICULTURISM: GEOGRAPHY, LANGUAGES, MUSIC, AND FOOD

The various film locations depicted in *Walk on Water* include not only the two countries where most of the action occurs, Israel and Germany, but also the setting for the opening scene, Turkey. When the viewer meets Eyal, he is taking a boat ride as he poses as a tourist in Istanbul.

Although the scene could be limited to just following him as he follows the target of his assassination mission, the viewer hears a female voice over the public announcement system on the boat as she describes various landmarks during the boat tour. She not only describes the Bosphorus Bridge as connecting Europe and Asia and having been built in 1973, but puts the site in historical context by telling the passengers, "In the last 2,000 years, many nations wanted to control this special place" that links the two continents. Another bridge is described as the Sultan Mehmet Bridge, which opened in 1988. While seemingly inconsequential, the inclusion of descriptions of bridges also becomes a foreshadowing of sorts, with the physical structures in a key nexus in world geography symbolizing the future relationship between the German Axel and Israeli Eyal.

During Axel's visit to Pia in Israel, the viewer visits and learns about several locales as Eyal takes Axel sightseeing. Prior to their sojourn, Axel displays knowledge of the places he wants to see, illustrating he has done his research. Axel tells Eyal he wants to see the city of Haifa and "the Sea of Galilee, Kinneret." "You seem to know the country pretty well," responds Eyal, impressed by Axel's knowledge that in Israel the Sea of

Galilee is known as Lake Kinneret.¹ It is on the shore of Kinneret that Axel tries to “walk on water,” to the amusement of Eyal. They also visit the Dead Sea, where they cover themselves in the sea’s mud, a practice based on the mud’s reputation as a restorative skin treatment.

Axel, Pia, and Eyal also take a trip to Tel Aviv, known for its nightlife. There they have dinner at a fancy restaurant and visit a nightclub. In the nighttime scenes of the city, indications of globalization can be seen, as the camera scans the street, showing a McDonald’s restaurant sign in English and in Hebrew on the side of building. The group also goes to Jerusalem, involving a side trip in which Axel goes with Rafiq to buy a coat at Rafiq’s uncle’s shop in Bayt Jala, a Palestinian town south of Jerusalem on the West Bank. Eyal takes Pia to the Wailing Wall. There he asks Pia if she wants to place a note in the wall, a customary practice. “This is the Wall. Maybe you’d like to put a note there. The religious believe God reads them,” Eyal informs her.

Later, Eyal visits Axel in Berlin as part of his continuing mission to find the siblings’ grandfather. During their drive to Axel’s parents’ house, they stop at a roadside hotel for coffee. Looking out the restaurant window Axel explains to Eyal, “That was the first highway in Germany. In the ‘20s they had car races here.” He then explains that the grandstand next to the highway was where politicians and aristocrats would sit. “And then, Hitler,” Eyal asks. “Yes, he was sitting there, too,” replies Axel. This historical tidbit reminds the viewer of the reason for Eyal’s relationship with Axel up to this point in the film—even as Eyal starts to show signs of actually liking Axel as a person rather than simply a means to completing his mission. These various locales and brief descriptions of their historical significance become points at which students

can learn about world history. Especially cogent are the cultural practices that mark their uniqueness, such as the Dead Sea mud treatment and the Wailing Wall's prominence as a religious site.

Multilingualism serves as one of the more prominent markers of multiculturalism in the film, with Hebrew, German, Arabic, and English spoken at various points. Eyal speaks all four languages, and Axel and Pia, are native German speakers, proficient in English, and learning Hebrew. Code switching, which refers to "the selection of language to be used in particular interactions by individuals who can speak multiple languages" (Lustig and Koester 175), is prominent in several scenes throughout the film. Indeed, in the first few moments of the opening scene in Istanbul, the wife of Eyal's target speaks Arabic after her husband collapses, then starts shouting "Help! Help! Help! Please help!" in English. When Axel reunites with Pia on the kibbutz, the two speak German; Pia switches to Hebrew when talking to Eyal. When Eyal replies in fast-paced Hebrew, Pia says in Hebrew, "You speak too fast," whereupon she switches to English, saying, "I don't speak very good Hebrew." Within this conversation one hears the three different languages, with English serving as a sort of third-party verbal code.²

Pia's learning of Hebrew offers a short lesson for viewers in addition to a marker of her intercultural competence. During one scene in her kibbutz apartment, Axel notices that there is a piece of paper taped to the refrigerator with the Hebrew word "MEKARĒR." Pia then points to the notes she has taped to other items: "AROHN" on a cupboard (for "chest") and "DELET" on the door. On her front door is a small sign as well, with her name "Pia" written in Roman letters and in Hebrew. Throughout the film, visual indicators of

a global perspective appear in footage in Israel, with signage in English and Hebrew. The learning of certain terms and their utterance by characters adds to this aspect of multiculturalism; Axel even calls his parents' villa their "kibbutz" later in the film.

The multilingualism in dialogue is enhanced by the variety of musical styles and artists that make up the film's soundtrack. Music serves as a peripheral cultural difference; it is a matter of taste, not core values, and can reflect one's own personal tastes as well. Eyal prefers American rock music, while Axel prefers songs performed by women singers only.³ Included in the soundtrack are songs by Israeli artists, such as Ivri Lider and Sivan Shavit, and Italian singer Gigliola Cinquetti. Several songs feature the Israeli singer Esther Ofarim, whom Axel notes was popular in Germany in the 1980s, and whose 1968 song "Cinderella Rockafella" with her husband Abi is a favorite of Axel and Pia ("Soundtracks"). They performed a lip synch act to it as children and during the kibbutz's entertainment night. Familiar to U.S. audiences in particular is Bruce Springsteen, whose "Tunnel of Love" makes an audio presence; Eyal is a fan of "The Boss" and listens to the song while driving Axel during their tour in Israel and later while relaxing at home. The range of song styles and artists highlights cultural differences while also adding to the theme of making connections between peoples. Indeed, in his review of the film, Koresky noted *Walk on Water's* soundtrack as one of the highlights of the film.

Opening the film is a funk-sounding version of Stephen Stills' protest song "For What It's Worth," remixed by German DJ and arranger Shantel (using a Sergio Mendes and Brasil 66 version). The song serves as a motif throughout the film. The Buffalo Springfield version of the same song also plays in the

taxi Eyal rides in when he arrives in Berlin later in the film. The song's allusions to the uncertainty of turbulent times can be applied to the Second Intifada, the historical setting of the film. At the Himmelman estate in Berlin, the use of music also becomes a means for irony when Axel teaches the German partygoers at his father's birthday celebration the Israeli folk dance to the same music that was played when he learned the dance at Pia's kibbutz. Just a few feet away from the party, unbeknownst to Axel, is his Nazi grandfather, flown in by his mother as a surprise. The performance of an Israeli folk dance juxtaposed with the source of Israel's founding further alludes to the downfall of Nazi Germany.

One obvious marker of cultural difference is food. Although food does not appear prominently in this film, aside from mentions of fish by the tour guide announcement during the Istanbul sequence and in the kibbutz dining hall, new and different foods can offer a way to foreshadow change and acceptance of different "others." One scene in particular features food as a means of alluding to Eyal's slow but steady change during his visit to Berlin, when Axel treats him to some German fast food on the street: currywurst (curry ketchup sauce covering sausage). Fleeting though this scene may be, it comes at a point in the narrative where Axel gives Eyal a tour of his own country, a role reversal that allows Eyal to change not only his worldview, but eventually his life as well.

INTERCULTURISM AND INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

"He was trained to hate, until he met the enemy," reads the promotional tagline for the film that appears on the DVD packaging. In that stereotyping and prejudice are key concepts in intercultural education, this aspect of *Walk on Water* becomes especially central in Eyal's narrative. Throughout

the film, he is confronted by those whom he has a pre-established dislike, bordering on hatred. Axel represents two groups of people that Eyal has a problem with: Axel is German and he is gay. Eyal's prejudices are revealed in his conversations with his supervisor Menachem and a fellow Mossad agent. Eyal already resents having to spy on the Germans Axel and Pia, and when he finally realizes that Axel is gay during the group's outing in Tel Aviv, he becomes even more resentful. In addition to Axel's sexual orientation and national heritage, his compassion and empathy for the Palestinian suicide bombers early in the film irks Eyal. During their tour of the Israeli countryside, a suicide bombing had just occurred in Haifa. Talking about the incident, Axel asks Eyal, "Did you ever think about why these people are doing this? I mean how desperate they are to go out and kill themselves?" "What's to think?" replies an unmoved Eyal. "They're animals." Axel goes on to say that the Palestinians have mothers and children, to which Eyal asks why they're killing Israeli mothers and children. "There's nothing to think about," Eyal says, ending the conversation.

Eyal's hatred for Palestinians turns to mistreatment when Axel purchases a coat from Rafiq's uncle, an Arab. Eyal thinks Axel is overcharged, and makes the uncle give back Axel more change. However, hints of civility do become apparent in Eyal's interaction with Rafiq after the argument at Rafiq's uncle's shop. The scene ends on a somewhat polite note, as Rafiq thanks him giving him a ride, to which Eyal says you're welcome. Though appearing minor, this particular interaction between Eyal and Rafiq does not escalate into further anger. Rather, Rafiq's calm demeanor counters Eyal's brusqueness, demonstrating how civility on a personal level often highlights that a hated "other" is an individual person who deserves to be treated decently.

Popular thought in the area of intercultural communication holds that creating opportunities for contact between members of differing cultures creates positive attitudes, but evidence shows this is not always the case, as noted by Lustig and Koester. They cite the work of Gordon Allport, whose "contact hypothesis" (289) requires that, in order to reduce prejudice, interactions need to have support from high status individuals, be invested with a personal stake by participants, and be viewed as constructive and enjoyable. Cantile, in "About Interculturalism," points to the contribution of Allport and others, concluding that "these findings reinforce the view that contact has a significant role to play in prejudice reduction, and has great policy potential as a means to improve intergroup relations, because it can simultaneously impact large numbers of people."

In that interculturalism stresses the urgency of interacting with cultural others as a path to peace and harmony, Eyal's interactions with Axel illustrate how personal communication can achieve this end. Although initially put off by Axel, whom he saw as a "pseudo liberal" who held too much sympathy for "the other side" (Palestinians), Eyal's experiences with Axel during their time in Israel and in Berlin are portrayed onscreen as mostly positive and even fun. In Berlin, Eyal takes off his Mossad agent mask and becomes himself, even asking Axel questions about the etiquette of gay sex; this somewhat humorous conversation simultaneously becomes a way for the two to become psychologically intimate. Over the course of the film, scenes between Eyal and Axel build upon previous ones; they get to know each other as persons, illustrating the importance of positive interactions in overcoming prejudice and hate.

The portrayals of Axel and Pia point to another aspect of the film that relates to interculturalism and intercultural educa-

tion in general: the display of personality traits and skills that make for competent intercultural communicators. Arasaratnam and Doerfel interviewed a sample of Americans and internationals at a large university, asking them what qualities describe competent intercultural communicators. Respondents described competent intercultural individuals as person-centered, sensitive, kind, having experience with and wanting to learn about different cultures, and open to others.

Both Axel and Pia display these traits throughout the film. The viewer sees both Axel and Pia seeking new cultural experiences and proficiency: Pia has moved to Israel, lives on a kibbutz, and actively learns Hebrew and Axel does his research about Israel and learns the Israeli folk dance while at the kibbutz. Further, Axel tells Eyal he will teach the dance to “his” children—the immigrant children for whom he is a teacher in Berlin—and teaches the dance as a birthday gift to his father, sharing his new knowledge with others. That interest in others’ verbal codes also characterizes intercultural competence (Lustig and Koester); in addition to Pia’s learning of Hebrew, several times in the film Eyal corrects Axel’s pronunciation of Israeli names, with Axel repeating the name correctly (such as “Kinneret” and “Ofarim”).

Chen and Starosa cite in particular four attributes of competent intercultural communicators: open-mindedness, nonjudgmental attitudes, social relaxation, and a self-concept that includes optimism and confidence-inspiring outlook, extroversion, and self-reliance. Both Pia and Axel enjoy meeting new people and learning new things and display an open, nonjudgmental attitude toward others. Axel’s empathy for Palestinian suicide bombers illustrates empathy, another trait associated with intercultural competence (Arasaratnam and Doerfel). The siblings’ desire to learn and explore the

Israeli land and culture, combined with the way they greet others with emotional openness thus present models for competent intercultural communication. Their only discernible aversion, it appears, is toward their Nazi family heritage; this becomes further emphasized when Axel tells Eyal that the neo-Nazis who attacked Axel's friends in the Berlin subway "turn the world to sh**" and that Eyal should have killed them. In this regard, the viewer sees that Axel shares with Eyal a worldview that stands against a common foe.

CONCLUSION

As with other fictional media, *Walk on Water* conveys a reality of sorts in terms of depicting locales and historical facts central and peripheral to its main narrative. Simultaneously, intercultural communication concepts are reified through the interaction of characters who present to each other in some way an actual cultural "Other." This article examined how a fictional story can illustrate the benefits that arise from multiculturalism and interculturalism. Multiculturalism becomes evident in the places, languages, and music used in this film, while interculturalism colors the interactions between the main characters of Eyal and Axel. Both are modes designed to reduce prejudice and create a world in which all people can live in harmony (Cantile; Morrison and Chung). Axel and Pia serve as models of intercultural competence, and positive characters that exemplify what it means to be a good human being in general. Storytelling via this particular filmic example of educational entertainment becomes a way to make concepts and theories vivid, while providing models of competent intercultural communicators that invite critical viewing.

This critical viewing is a way to incorporate into intercultural education another concept that relates to intercultural com-

petence: the consideration of viewpoints unfamiliar to one's own culture. For example, the movie guide for *Walk on Water* from AZM includes a discussion question aimed at exploring how the film presents the theme of relationships: "How do set characteristics such as nationality, sexual orientation and family background inform a person's relationship with the outside world? To what extent can beliefs based on this information change over time?" (45). The influences and accumulation of experiences that shape the mechanisms and perspectives through which we relate to this outside world invokes standpoint theory, which "advocates the inclusion of all people and perspectives rather than reifying the status quo or inverting the current hegemonic order. Further, it focuses on how the circumstances and culture of one's life influence her or his perspective, values, beliefs" (Patton 32). In that empathy serves as one of the pillars of intercultural competence and acknowledgement of one's own biases and assumptions plays a vital role in attaining intercultural competence, standpoint theory becomes yet another concept to tie to the film's underlying message of tolerance and understanding. Indeed, although not the focus of the current study, a meta-analysis of the scholarship which has examined *Walk on Water* serves as a path for further research, one which examines how the authors of these works (as well as film critics' assessments) approach the same text through different prisms.

The constant and underlying theme of *Walk on Water* reminds the viewer of the destructive and ongoing aftermath of the Holocaust, and how intolerance, prejudice, and need for revenge only lead to more of the same. At story's end, the optimism relayed by the new home life of Eyal and Pia—even as critics of the film may have seen it as implausible—offers the viewer a metaphor for the possibility of reconciliation and peace. Eyal becomes family to those whom he consid-

ered the enemy. He and Axel have become not only friends, but also brothers, as a result of their intercultural contact and interaction. Their story of what can happen when people see each other as people is underscored by director Eytan Fox's dedication at the film's close: "IN MEMORY OF MY MOTHER SARAH KAMINKER A FIGHTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND PEACE."⁴ Fox's final words for the viewer reaffirms the potential for movies to tell cognitively and emotionally provocative stories that promote the pro-social goals of intercultural communication.

NOTES

- 1 Reference for all dialogue: Gal Uchovsky (Screenwriter), and Eytan Fox (Director). *Walk on Water (Lalechet Al Ha-Mayim)*. Tel Aviv: Lama Films and United King Films, 2004.
- 2 Hagin explained that that reason for the film's multilingualism was to reach an international market. The presence of multiple languages nonetheless adds to the film's intercultural value.
- 3 Hagin describes the music preferences of Eyal and Axel as masculine and feminine, respectively, further underscoring their differences even though both are men.
- 4 In an interview with writer Michael Fox in *Jewish Weekly*, Eytan Fox described his mother as an "old lefty"; she worked as "a city planner in charge of developing Arab neighborhoods and villages in East Jerusalem" (12b). See the article for more on how Eytan Fox's mother influenced his outlook and *Walk on Water*.

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The X-Fantastic

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ABSTRACT

Contrary to the commonly accepted understanding, the popular TV show *The X-Files* is in reality much closer to fantasy than to science fiction, as its narrative authority is built on the opposition between the believable and the impossible, rather than on anticipatory speculation or space fantasy adventures. A close structural analysis of the series' main paradigms demonstrates how the narrative universe of *The X-Files* perfectly illustrates the most fundamental traits of a modern fantasy, by administering supernatural elements—including aliens—within a hyperrealistic environment in order to suggest the failure of our epistemological tools when confronted with the unknown.

Keywords: *The X-Files*; fantasy; hyperreality; unexplainable phenomena; structural analysis

El X-Fantastic

RESUMEN

Contrariamente a la noción comúnmente aceptada, el popular programa de televisión Los Archivos secretos X está en realidad mucho más cerca del modo fantástico que de la ciencia ficción, ya que su autoridad narrativa se basa en una oposición constante entre lo muy creíble y lo imposible en lugar de anticiparse especulaciones o aventuras de fantasía espacial. Un análisis estructural detallado de los paradigmas principales de la serie demostrará cómo el universo narrativo

de *Los Archivos secretos X* ilustra perfectamente los rasgos más fundamentales del modo fantástico moderno mediante la administración de los elementos sobrenaturales, incluido el alienígena, dentro de un entorno hiperrealista en orden. para sugerir el fracaso de nuestras herramientas epistemológicas cuando nos enfrentamos a lo desconocido.

Palabras clave: *Los Archivos secretos X*; fantástico; hiperrealidad; fenómenos inexplicables; análisis estructural;

The X-Fantastic

摘要

与广为接受的理念相反的是，流行电视节目《X档案》在现实中更接近于奇幻模式，而不是科幻小说，因为其叙事权威建立于极其可信与不可信之间的一个持续对立，而不是基于预期推测或空间幻想冒险。对该剧的主要范式进行细致的结构性分析将证明，《X档案》的叙事体系如何通过在一个超现实环境中运用包括外星人在内的超自然元素，描绘现代奇幻模式的基本特征，以暗示我们在面临未知时现有认知工具的失败。

关键词：《X档案》，奇幻，超现实，无法解释的现象，结构性分析

Contrary to the common notion shared by authors and fans alike, the series *The X-Files* is much closer to fantasy than to science fiction, as the narrative tension that most episodes rely on is the result of the opposition between what is accepted as possible and what defies our understanding of reality rather than of the defamiliarization

created by an entirely new universe. Compare the narrative settings of *Star Trek*—a fine example of space fantasy—or of *Black Mirror*—a good instance of dystopian anticipation—with that of *The X-Files* in order to see the profound differences between space fantasy or anticipatory fiction and fantasy when it comes to the representation of reality. Just as ghosts do not make fantasy, as shown by *Casper the Friendly Ghost* or Oscar Wilde's "The Canterville Ghost," aliens do not make science fiction. In the case of *The X-Files*, the elusive presence of an extraterrestrial life form, underlined by Mulder's personal tragedy—the loss of his sister Samantha, who is allegedly abducted by aliens—merely functions as a recurring supernatural element that disrupts what appears otherwise to be a highly identifiable universe, thus creating the narrative tension characteristic of fantasy.

The very *raison d'être* of *The X-Files* is to attempt to explain the unexplainable, which remains the fundamental narrative dynamics of fantasy narration, as exemplified by Maupassant's "Le Horla" or Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. The irruption of a supernatural element in everyday reality is not enough by itself to create the characteristic narrative tension of fantasy, it must also be perceived as unacceptable and, as the narration progresses, elicit our constant attempts to reduce it to rational terms. Most episodes of *The X-Files* are built on this specific pattern and consequently, the series as a whole constitutes an exemplary corpus of study to illustrate many fundamental traits of fantasy.

Maupassant's Echo

In both form and content, *The X-Files* illustrates quite clearly Maupassant's forerunning conception of the modern fantastic mode, which, in order to be effective, must "... *de troubler*

avec des faits naturels où reste pourtant quelque chose d'inexpliqué et de presque impossible" ("... disturb with natural facts, where still remains something unexplained, almost impossible") (*Chroniques*, "Le Fantastique" ["The Fantastic"]). If Maupassant clearly perceives the acute difference between the fantastic and marvelous modes, he does not however distinguish fantasy from the uncanny, which is one category of realism that does not include the possibility of the impossible within its narrative universe. Nonetheless, Maupassant's view points to the paradoxical importance of realistic elements and their fundamental role within the economy of fantasy narration: fantasy must appear realistic in order to establish narrative authority by contrasting the possible and the impossible, constantly flirting with the possibility of an extreme, uncanny representation of reality, which does not, however, transgress any physical laws. Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado" comes to mind, and it is significant that Maupassant cited the author of "The Raven" a few lines apart from his definition of fantasy. Regardless of how improbable the story of "The Cask of Amontillado" might appear to be, as it is that of a man walling in another man alive, it does not escape the laws of our reality and thus corresponds to the realistic mode of narration. In spite of the many misconceptions it defends, such as the disappearance of fantasy at the end of the nineteenth century or its substitution by psychoanalysis, which would then have to be considered as a literary genre in itself, Todorov's canonical study, *Introduction à la Littérature Fantastique*, establishes a clear and useful distinction between fantasy and realism in its uncanny modality, citing some of Poe's short stories as good examples of the latter, complementing Maupassant's original description. It is indeed much easier to confuse fantasy with the uncanny than with science fiction or the marvelous, since ultimately, fanta-

sy depends on a loyal representation of an easily identifiable reality in order to make the impossible seem *almost* possible.

The X-Files perfectly embodies the conception of the modern fantasy that Maupassant anticipated by administering the supernatural paradigms in the subtlest way, in order to preserve constant tension between the believable and the unbelievable. Naturally, supernatural elements have become more discrete than ever: the receptor of today is even more skeptical than the already disillusioned reader of the late nineteenth century, who, according to Maupassant, could no longer be seduced or frightened by the legends of yesteryear and needed to be presented with a believable narrative universe in order to accept the possibility of the supernatural. Consequently, some episodes of *The X-Files* are to be considered uncanny rather than fantasy, s they reduce the supernatural dimension to such an extent that it sometimes disappears, as in one of the most disturbing entries of the series, “Home,” which presents the life and times of a terrifyingly grotesque inbred family. It does not include any supernatural element in its narrative universe and hence cannot be considered to be fantasy. This particular episode could even be deemed naturalistic, since it exploits a thematic staple of naturalism, the degeneration of a family, and it uses a characteristically harsh descriptive style for the most sordid and perturbing aspects of reality, both to be found in the works of the founder of naturalism himself, Émile Zola, which caused some scandal at the end of the nineteenth century—not unlike the backlash that “Home” stirred when it was first aired. This particular episode also reminds us of the infamous Leatherface and his family, from Tobe Hooper’s *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, which, for all its gore and horrid images, still remains within the boundaries of reality, however perturbing it may be. The abnormal is not the supernatural, and some of the monsters

that populate *The X-Files* are indeed human and possible. But not all.

THE X FORMAT

From an onomastic point of view, the title of *The X-Files* functions very much like that of *The Twilight Zone*: while the words “file” and “zone” belong to an administrative register and suggest precision and cataloging, the terms “X” and “Twilight” emphasize the unknown, the imprecise, and the indeterminate. Within its very title, the show suggests the basic opposition that underlies fantasy: that of the known against the unknown. This opposition is found again within the most fundamental structural elements of the narration, namely the characters of Mulder and Scully. Mulder being the believer and Scully the skeptic allows for the tension between what is rationally acceptable and what is not, which becomes dynamically and dialectically articulated throughout their interaction. By their very pairing, the two main characters of the show embody the most basic opposition indispensable to fantasy: while Scully represents a normalized, unidimensional view of reality, Mulder welcomes—embraces even—the possibility of the unbelievable: hence the famous “I Want to Believe” poster that decorates his basement office. Mulder’s desire to pursue the apparently “unreal” echoes the aesthetic intent of fantasy, which could be summed up as the ultimate attempt of narrative defamiliarization. Mulder as a narrative function is essentially motivated by his need to demonstrate the existence of the rationally unacceptable, as if familiar reality—the day-to-day operations of what is, after all, a bureaucratic institution known for its lack of sense of humor and imagination, the FBI—were simply not enough. Mulder and his desperate need to escape familiar epistemology is an example of the fundamental formalist concept of defamiliar-

ization, the sensation that art must produce in the receptor in order to defeat the “anaesthetizing” effect of familiar reality, which is disrupted by the irruption of supernatural occurrences in fantasy.

Formally speaking, *The X-Files* corresponds to the traditional shorter form favored by fantasy, both textually and cinematographically, which allows the creator to present and maintain a binary opposition between the possible and the impossible without the need to resolve it, promoting uncertainty and unbalance. It could be argued that Stoker’s novel *Dracula* is far from the short story format practiced by Poe (“Ligeia,” “Morella”), Guy de Maupassant, or H.P. Lovecraft; however, not only is it a fairly isolated example for its time, but also, its narrative structure, which allows for a variety of both voices and tones, allows for a constant change of perspective that implicitly fragments its unity. Until Stephen King (i.e., *Carrie*, *Needful Things*, *Pet Sematary*, and *Christine*), the modern fantasy has been perfectly suited to a shorter format, and still is in the cinematographic realm, as proven by the popular *Creepshow* (1982), written by Stephen King, *Tales from the Hood* (1995), and the more recent *American Nightmares* (2018). The short format is highly privileged in fantasy as it prevents the supernatural elements that produce the fantastic effect from overpowering the essential realistic dimension of the narration and helps preserve the fundamental tension between the real and the unreal.

Similarly to Jean Ray’s *The Adventures of Harry Dickson*, which pitted a rational detective against irrational enigmas, *The X-Files* also illustrates by its very structure the parallelism between fantasy and realism in its detective fiction modality: just like a detective story, fantasy narration presents a mystery and an attempt to solve it, which often involves some type

of investigation, as we see in *Dracula* and Maupassant's "Le Horla," where the protagonist attempts to understand the nature of the ghost that haunts his nights by collecting the clues it leaves behind and setting nightly traps to prove his own theories to himself. In the final analysis, what distinguishes fantasy from uncanny realism in detective fiction is the fundamental impossibility of closing the narrative structure: whereas detective fiction always presents a satisfactory explanation for what appeared to be unexplained, fantasy does not, and the unexplained remains the unexplainable—and this is amply demonstrated by the traditionally open-ended report that concludes many *The X-Files* episodes.

By framing the supernatural occurrence within the rigid, hyperrealistic environment of an FBI investigation, *The X-Files* introduces one more level of credibility to the narration: the protagonists of a fantasy adventure benefit from the rational seriousness we usually associate with the Bureau. The computer font captions on the bottom of the screen, which introduce time and/or place at the beginning of each episode, formally complement this administrative atmosphere, unidimensional by definition, by reducing the narrative context to mere topographic and chronological information and promoting the identification of the receptor with a realistic, not to say excessively dehumanizingly rational, environment. By openly merging two very similar, albeit antithetical, narrative structures—the detective story and the fantastic tale—*The X-Files*, just like Jean Ray's adventures of Harry Dickson, benefits from the positivist premises of this particular narrative category, which in turns enhances the epistemological rupture generated by the supernatural occurrence by radicalizing the terms of its fundamental binary opposition: FBI agents are supposedly more rational than average citizens and are trained to investigate the unexplained. The possibility of the

supernatural event is hence all the more convincing and consequently, more threatening than ever when it defeats official representative figures of law and order, whose mere presence by itself already reinforces narrative authority—indeed, if we cannot trust the FBI, then, whom can we trust?

LIMITED INSUBORDINATION

As most typical protagonists in fantasy, and in spite of being apparently covered by the administrative authority of the all mighty Bureau, Mulder and Scully are usually isolated in their confrontation with the supernatural and the opposition they encounter, especially within their own organization. This is a recurrent paradigm of the series, corresponding to a definite tendency of the mode: the protagonist of fantasy adventures is typically isolated, confronted by collective disbelief, as his or her conception of reality has irremediably shifted, along with the epistemological certainties that go with it. In *The X-Files*, this opposition is already a given, not only due to Scully's decidedly skeptical frame of mind, but also because she has been expressly assigned to the X-files to keep an eye on "Spooky Mulder": that is, to debunk his assertions regarding the possibility of the impossible. The FBI functions as both the repository and administrator of the official normalized epistemological order, which cannot admit any supernatural occurrence. The fact that some of its highest, most powerful, and shadowy figures, such as the Cigarette Smoking Man, work to hide the evidence of any rationally unacceptable phenomenon only enhance the possibility of the latter's existence, by causing the unknown to become closer and more tangible: it is undeniably *there*, even if it solely remains out of our reach due to a conspiracy at the highest levels.

As the series progresses, the opposition between the agents and their superiors becomes more acute and creates a supplementary layer of narrative tension that parallels the basic conflict between the possible and the impossible that we find at the core of most episodes. Nevertheless, Mulder and Scully, as narrative functions, are indissociable from the FBI, which still represents the ultimate, unequivocal authority, above that of local law enforcement. In spite of their bordering-on-rebellious attitude and their often precarious position vis-à-vis their superiors, they are still endorsed by the Bureau and directly benefit from its immediate semiotic value: they officially represent the rejection of the unexplainable—it is, after all, their job—while at the same time accepting the possibility of its existence. In fantasy narrative structure, these two FBI agents—the skeptic and the believer—represent the two somewhat conflicting sides of Jean Ray's Harry Dickson, the detective of the unknown, who struggles to successfully rationalize the uncanny but often must accept a side of reality that escapes acceptable epistemology. Although Mulder and Scully are constantly confronted by events they cannot possibly comprehend, they remain Bureau employees, subject to rules and regulations and implicitly normalized. While they do not always follow procedure, they regularly face and endure the administrative consequences of their misconduct. Besides their concern for rules and regulations, which are never absent from their actions, Mulder and Scully also look and dress the part of official bureaucratic servants, in their formal and usually sober attires—they could be lawyers or accountants—and usually adopt a rather dry, flat attitude. If we are indeed occasionally treated to some wit, the series emphasizes seriousness over humor, in order to preserve the fundamental frame of fantasy, i.e., a realistic representation of reality—and a fun FBI is not realistic.

Given that the protagonist of fantasy narration is usually an unremarkable individual in order to establish narrative authority by promoting identification with the receptor, the protagonists of *The X-Files*—just like Jean Ray’s Harry Dickson—present an interesting compromise. Although Mulder and Scully are doubtlessly intelligent and intellectually well-prepared, they do not, on the other hand, exhibit any particularly remarkable qualities, either physical or mental: they are incapable of the physical prowess of action heroes and their deductive capabilities are usually defeated by supernatural occurrences. They are fundamentally unprepared to deal with the unknown, which often causes them to fall victims to their own investigation, as happens in “Darkness Falls” (Season 1, Ep. 20), where Mulder and Scully are attacked by nightly swarms of nearly microscopic insects in the depths of the Washington State National Forest, or in “Field Trip” (Season 6, Ep. 21), where they are in the process of being devoured in the fields of North Carolina by a monstrous spore-type organism that subdues its victims by making them hallucinate while drenching them in digestive acids. In both instances, the helpless, evidently overwhelmed agents owe their lives to an external rescue mission, and their powerlessness when confronted by the supernatural occurrence corresponds perfectly to that of the typical protagonist of fantastic adventures.

We find the same pattern in “Død Kalm” (Season 2, Ep. 19), which shows the agents stranded on a ghost ship in the Norwegian Sea, prey to a mysterious oxidizing agent that accelerates the aging process and turns them into two utterly decrepit individuals, who grow increasingly feeble until they lose consciousness, in spite of Scully’s desperate efforts to trace the origin of the process. After they are rescued by the Navy and wake up in a hospital, Scully is told by a physician

that the notes she took during the event helped establish the protocol that brought her and Mulder back to life, restoring some usefulness to the alleged heroes of the fantastic event. However, once again, the agents' survival was contingent upon the intervention of an external, well-equipped force, which tends to intervene as a *deus ex machina* to save the day and the heroes of the series. "Død Kalm" was critiqued upon its release for this reason, as the *in extremis* rescue of the heroes appeared to be quite unbelievable, consequently provoking a loss of narrative authority. What has gone so far unnoticed, however, is that the main paradigms of "Død Kalm"—a ghost ship and the ravages of decrepitude—are the same as in Edgar Allan Poe's "M.S. Found in a Bottle," which tells the tale of a shipwreck victim in a mysterious sea near the South Pole, who washes up onto the deck of an enormous ship manned by an utterly decrepit crew:

Like the one I had at first seen in the hold, they all bore about them the marks of a hoary old age. Their knees trembled with infirmity, their shoulders were bent double with decrepitude, their shrivelled skins rattled in the wind, their voices were low, tremulous, and broken, their eyes glistened with the rheum of years, and their gray hairs streamed terribly in the tempest. (134)

Unlike some of Poe's most well-known stories of the uncanny persuasion, "MS Found in a Bottle" belongs to the fantastic mode, as it describes the impossible in a realistic manner and establishes narrative tension by confronting the narrator with a series of incomprehensible phenomena that defeat his understanding, despite his constant efforts to rationalize his situation by exploring the mysterious ship, just like in "Død

Kalm.” As another interesting coincidence, Poe’s story features a Swedish sailor, the only member of the crew along with the narrator to survive the original shipwreck, similar to the Norwegian sailor who takes Mulder and Scully aboard the abandoned ship in “Død Kalm.” Furthermore, the beginning of Poe’s tale presents a deadly calm sea, “As night came on, every breath of wind died away, and a more entire calm it is impossible to conceive” (129), which describes the overall context of “Død Kalm” and perfectly illustrates its title. Naturally, Poe’s story ends up in tears as the monstrous ship and its geriatric crew are swallowed by a gigantic ice vortex, a coherent, logical ending to the epistemological crisis generated by the unknown and which would have suited the narrative structure of “Død Kalm,” were it not for the necessity to keep the intrepid Mulder and Scully alive for the next episode.

The agents’ defeat can also be more subdued, as in “Bad Blood” (Season 5, Ep. 12), which shows Mulder and Scully drugged and fooled by a clandestine colony of vampires who escape their vigilance as effortlessly as they elude their understanding. This episode is narrated from a dual point of view, presenting Mulder and Scully getting their stories straight before appearing in front of their supervisor and emphasizing the impossibility of adjusting the supernatural to one single objective description, further alienating the subject from reality. Not only has this highly suspect group of blood-suckers easily slipped away from their grasp, but the agents themselves cannot agree on what they have witnessed, as the supernatural occurrence resists a satisfying description. Ultimately, Mulder and Scully are just as epistemologically defenseless against the unknown as any typical protagonist in fantasy. Their originality stems from the fact that they are simultaneously with and against the FBI, and so the supernatural is both accepted and rejected by the Bureau, which

stands for the ultimate referee of the acceptable, official truth. Nevertheless, at the end of the day—literally—Mulder and Scully display their ultimate normality by filing in their traditional report as good government employees ought to.

As we can see, and despite all appearances, the protagonists of *The X-Files* correspond to the profile of the typical protagonist of fantastic narration, who is more average than exceptional, and more victim rather than vanquisher. He or she is confronted with a phenomenon beyond the limits of his or her customary perception and understanding of reality, which naturally renders him or her powerless. For all their apparent resentment with the establishment, Mulder and Scully are not exceptional enough to leave the Bureau and are implicitly normalized by the nature of their social occupation—they might carry guns, but they remain legal bureaucrats.

MONSTERS AND ALIENS

The supernatural threat in *The X-Files* is represented in a diversity of manners, ranging from unexplainable freakish mutations to the equally incomprehensible technological betrayal, and the eventuality of its mere existence is usually enough to justify and sustain the narration. Many of these impossible occurrences could be classified in two main categories: monsters and science gone wrong, both embodied by Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, albeit in a romantic, pre-modern fantasy that soon transfers the narrative conflict from the opposition between the possible and the impossible to the decidedly more abstract and openly philosophical considerations of the true nature of love and consciousness, responding to its fundamental romantic intent. Nonetheless, because of its physically impossible genesis, Frankenstein's monster remains a supernatural creature, in opposition to *Notre Dame*

de Paris' Quasimodo or *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre's* Leatherface, and somewhat prefigures Maupassant's "Le Horla," Stoker's *Dracula*, and most of the creatures Mulder and Scully confront throughout their adventures. Fantasy monsters are not "acceptable" ones, like hunchbacks or disfigured psychopaths—both anomalies of nature created by nature itself—but entirely inconceivable creatures, severed from any known mechanism of evolution, such as those encountered in "Squeeze" (Season 1, Ep. 3) and "Host" (Season 2, Ep. 2), which feature, respectively, a man capable of elongating his body to the point of penetrating homes through small ventilation conduits (the elastic man) and a half-human half-worm creature that lives in the sewers of Newark (the flukeman). Besides his ability to stretch his body, the elastic man seems to have achieved immortality by surviving on a diet of fresh human liver, and the flukeman is apparently capable of regeneration after being sliced in half. Both of these creatures are clearly beyond the realm of human understanding and will remain so until the end, as the closing shots of both episodes, typical of cinematographic fantasy narrations, do not resolve anything, but rather suggest further unexplainable confrontations in the future: Tooms—the elastic man—is shown smiling at the slot in the door through which he has just been handed food, and the top half of the flukeman, lost in a sewer somewhere, opens his eyes just before the end credits start rolling. It is clear that the elastic man should be able to stretch his way out of jail and that the flukeman was not killed after being severed in half—and, sure enough, both characters later reappear, the first in "Tooms" (Season 1, Ep. 21) and the second in a 2013 comic book series, *X-Files Season 10*.

The monsters that appear in *The X-Files* are characteristic of fantasy since they do not belong to any naturally pre-es-

established category of abnormality—unlike Quasimodo or Leatherface. We find reminiscences of stock figures, a bit of vampirism and lycanthropy here and there (“Bad Blood,” Season 5, Ep. 12, “Shapes,” Season 1, Ep. 19, and “X-Cops,” Season 7, Ep. 12), plus a fair amount of old local mysteries and folk tales and traditions, which are consistently recontextualized in our reality, and hence, clearly severed from their marvelous origin. Some of *The X-Files* monsters can even have perfectly mundane appearances, as with a soft-spoken gardener who is in reality a dangerous and unexplainable pyrokinetic freak (“Fire,” Season 1, Ep. 12) or an innocent little girl who turns out to be the reincarnation of a dead policeman seeking vengeance (“Born Again,” Season 1, Ep. 22). To better distinguish true supernatural monstrosity from its human counterpart, the series even presents the FBI’s own monstrous character, morally speaking, under the guise of “the Smoking Man,” an absolute sociopath with a high ranking position and invulnerable status, and whose taste for lies and deceptions and hatred for human life is demonstrated throughout the series. The Smoking Man is indeed an ethical monster, as inhuman as can be, but unfortunately also very realistic.

In a more modernist fashion, *The X-Files* also incorporates what could be described as scientific fantasy, which breaks down the limits of our epistemological certainties by introducing an impossible phenomenon with a scientific alibi, as for instance in H.G. Wells’ *The Invisible Man* or in many of Jean Ray’s tales of Harry Dickson. A bit before it became fashionable to exploit the betrayal of artificial intelligence (AI), *The X-Files* dug into the subject from the very first season with “Ghost in the Machine” (Season 1, Ep. 7), where a Central Operating System-based AI technology has become sentient and starts killing its main operators in order not to

be shut down, and again in the fifth season with “Kill Switch” (Ep. 11), where another AI uses satellite-based laser beams to destroy its enemies. Although the AI paradigm might suggest the anticipatory mode, i.e., science fiction, it is treated here in the fantastic mode, as yet one more unexplainable parcel of reality that resists rational understanding until the very end: in the tradition of the fantastic, wide-open narrative structure, both episodes conclude with the AI coming back to life, as a definite promise of more incomprehensible digital evil to come. In science fiction, this would be the beginning rather than the end, and the narrative tension would be based on the conflict between the humans and the AI, as in Phillip K. Dick’s *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and its cinematographic adaptation, *Blade Runner*, or as in the Wachowski sisters’ *The Matrix*. In fantasy, however, it is the impossibility of reducing observed phenomena to rational terms that creates narrative tension: the story ends once the existence of this impossibility has been clearly established. When using a scientific alibi, fantasy ends precisely where science fiction begins.

This is perhaps most explicit in *The X-Files*’ treatment of the alien motif, the presence of which might explain in great part why the show was perceived and is still often categorized as “science fiction,” which is quite an uncanny classification when one considers that some of the most memorable episodes of the show have nothing to do with any extraterrestrial presence. In the economy of the overall narration, the alien shines by its absence, and the episodes devoted to its possible presence on earth remain just as inconclusive as the others. In the same fashion as the AI narrative motif, the alien paradigm functions as another possibility of the impossible in *The X-Files* universe and is rarely shown and almost never directly confronted. Incidentally, one might wonder why

the extraterrestrial creatures—whenever they finally physically appear—is always dead or dying; as beings allegedly of a superior intelligence capable of intergalactic travel, one must deduce that these aliens are remarkably bad pilots or, at least, fairly unprepared for space exploration. But fantasy narration is not about some superior intelligence, it is rather about the limitations of our own, and within the highly realistic universe of *The X-Files*, aliens are just one more unexplainable monster, which fulfills the same narrative function as microscopic cannibalistic insects, gelatinous spores digesting humans while making them hallucinate, or a wormlike humanoid born in a sewer out of a radioactive soup. They are tangible proof that we do not fully comprehend our own reality and that our reason—our epistemology—is simply not enough to confront the unknown.

THE TRUTH IS SOMEWHERE

Other than a few punctual exceptions, the opening credits of *The X-Files*, including those revamped for the eleventh and final season, end with the well-known tag line “The Truth is Out There,” which in French becomes the truth is “*hors là*”, that is, “The Truth is *Horla*.” Of course, this is just a coincidence. It has to be ... Doesn't it?

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Ambassador of Cajun Music: Jimmy C. Newman, 1927-2014

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by Michael Green

ABSTRACT

Jimmy C. Newman was a longtime country and Cajun singer, a member of the Grand Ole Opry for nearly 58 years, a music publisher, and an influential figure in Nashville and in his native Louisiana. His career was multi-faceted and included not only country music success, but also contributing greatly to the spread of Cajun music and Cajun culture late in the twentieth century.

Keywords: Jimmy C. Newman, Cajun, country music, Grand Ole Opry, music, Louisiana

Embajador de la música cajuna: Jimmy C. Newman, 1927-2014

RESUMEN

Jimmy C. Newman fue un cantante country y cajún de toda la vida, miembro del Grand Ole Opry durante casi 58 años, editor de música y una figura influyente en Nashville y en su natal Luisiana. Su carrera fue multifacética e incluyó no solo el éxito de la música country, sino que también contribuyó en gran medida a la difusión de la música cajuna y la cultura cajuna a fines del siglo XX.

Palabras clave: Jimmy C. Newman, cajún, música country, Grand Ole Opry, música, Luisiana

卡津音乐大使：吉米·C·纽曼
(1927年至2014年)

摘要

吉米·C·纽曼是一名长期的乡村兼卡津音乐歌手、大奥普里剧院的一员（近58年）、音乐发行人、并且在纳什维尔和他的家乡路易斯安那州都是一位具有影响力的人物。他的事业涉及多个方面，不仅包括成功的乡村音乐，还对20世纪末期的卡津音乐和卡津文化的传播作出杰出贡献。

关键词：吉米·C·纽曼（Jimmy C. Newman），卡津人，乡村音乐，大奥普里剧院，音乐，路易斯安那州

In February 1765, the first boat with French-speaking refugees from Acadia in Nova Scotia arrived in the present-day state of Louisiana, where their description of themselves as Acadians changed, just as regional dialects change, into Cajuns. Their departure was part of what one historian of Cajun culture calls an “ethnic cleansing.” The British had acquired French Canada two years before and deported the Catholic Acadians to other colonies; a group of them chose instead to head for what they thought was French territory. It turned out that the Treaty of Paris of 1763, which had conveyed French Canada from France to England, also shifted Louisiana from France to Spain. The Acadians moved into the swamps and bayous north of New Orleans, and created a new life for themselves, hoping to stay out of the way of authorities who might bother them (Bernard; C. Brasseaux; Jobb; Rushton).

Today, an Internet search for the word “Cajun” reveals the spread and influence of that culture. It covers everything from how a Cajun Mardi Gras differs from the more famous New Orleans version (it involves more music and chasing down food for a pot of gumbo) to restaurants across the country, including a fusion of Cajun and Asian cuisine, to festivals and folk remedies. It also demonstrates the popularity of Cajun music: in the first eight years in which the Grammy for Regional Roots Music has been presented, a category that also includes Hawaiian, Native American, and polka, among others, the Grammy went to a Cajun act four times (“250 years of Cajun culture in La”; Berger; Sagner).

On Friday, June 6, 2014, Cajun singer Jimmy C. Newman appeared on the opening segment of the *Friday Night Opry* at 7 p.m. He was scheduled for the following Friday night, but was unable to perform. He had fallen as he left the Opry the week before, and tests revealed that he suffered from cancer. He died on June 21, just as the Saturday night Grand Ole Opry went on the air, at the age of 87. He had been a member of the longest-running program in country music since August 1956; only five other entertainers ever had a longer tenure with that show. When he arrived as a twenty-nine-year-old rising country star, he was not actually Jimmy C. Newman, but he was the first Cajun to be a member of the most important show in country music, and the first Cajun to become a mainstream country recording artist. In the course of a musical career that spanned more than sixty-five years, he was an important part of country music and Cajun music, bridged the gap between the two, and helped bring Cajun culture, especially music, to national attention. One of the Cajun music Grammy winners, Jo-El Sonnier, said of him, “He was definitely the ambassador. He led us to where we are today” (CMA).

James Yves Newman was born on August 29, 1927, near the parish of Big Mamou, later the subject of one of his songs. In many ways, his life was typical of many country entertainers of his generation. He grew up listening to pioneers of the field: Jimmie Rodgers and the Carter Family, who were part of the “Big Bang” of country music, the “Bristol” recordings in 1927 that began major recording careers for both of them; Bob Wills, a leading figure in the development of Western swing in Texas; and, in Newman’s case, Gene Autry, the country singer and cowboy movie star. While he listened to Cajun music less often than to those performers, he also grew up amid such legendary Cajun recording artists and acts as Dennis McGee (a distant cousin) and the Hackberry Ramblers. Newman and his older brother Walter performed songs around the area to help earn money during the Great Depression. Newman’s father died before World War II began, and young Jimmy quit school after six years to work on a farm, and then serve as a welder’s helper in a wartime defense plant. There he met J.D. Miller, another worker who also was a songwriter and owner of a small record label. After the war, Newman joined Chuck Guillory’s Rhythm Boys as a singer and guitarist, recorded for Miller’s Feature Records and other Louisiana labels, and played what he called “skull orchards”—honky-tonks where many country singers of the time performed. His early performances combined Cajun French songs and stylings with country music, and learned Cajun music. He also hosted a television show on a station in Lake Charles, Louisiana (Cooper).¹

Just as the future “King of Country Music,” Roy Acuff, had toured with medicine shows and the eventual “Father of Bluegrass Music,” Bill Monroe, had moved from radio station

¹ Music reporter and historian Peter Cooper wrote the most extensive obituary for Nashville’s *Tennessean*, but I also rely on several obituaries in

to radio station in tandem with his brother Charlie and then on his own, Newman was honing his craft and looking for his big break. As he began his quest for prominence beyond his native area, he sang country music, but also included Cajun numbers. He and other Louisiana musicians were influenced by Harry Choates, a singing fiddler who had a regional hit with the frequently recorded Cajun classic “Jole Blon.” Newman’s style also reflected the impact of Hank Williams, who had a national hit with his own “Jambalaya,” released in 1952. But, Newman said, “For a long time, I couldn’t get a record contract because of my French accent” (Hagan 196; see also “Jimmy C. Newman’s Legacy: The C Stood for Cajun”; “Newman Changed the Way We Listen to Cajun Bluegrass”).

Two years later, having made his accent sound less French, Newman recorded his first real hit, “Cry, Cry, Darling,” and his career took off. Newman co-wrote the song with Miller, who then brought it to the attention of Fred Rose, Acuff’s partner in Nashville’s biggest music publishing company. When Newman’s recording reached #4 on the country charts, he became a member of the Louisiana Hayride, airing on KWKH in Shreveport—an important show in its own right, and becoming known (to the chagrin of its managers) as the top farm team for the Opry. On the Hayride, Newman performed alongside another singer on the rise. He said, “I did two Texas tours with Elvis in the mid-50s. I was there when he came to the Hayride (October 1954) and there when he left (March 1956). He ran off the older crowd when he came. And when he left, the younger crowd left, too. He came to the Hayride shaking, and he left shaking. He was a very different hillbilly, if he was a hillbilly, with his pink shirt and black pants. He was as nice as could be, and very shy”

the wake of Newman’s death (Bernard 46; Broven 61-64; *Chicago Tribune* A3; “Newman Changed the Way We Listen to Cajun Bluegrass”).

(Hagan 196; see also “Jimmy C. Newman’s Legacy: The C Stood for Cajun”; “Newman Changed the Way We Listen to Cajun Bluegrass”).²

Newman faced a similar problem with shyness. A native Cajun French speaker, he usually thought in his native tongue and then translated, leading to a form of English sometimes associated with Cajuns, eventually prompting Newman to joke about how the show was almost over because it was “ten after twenty on my watch,” and to sign off Opry segments by saying, “We’ll see you a while ago.” His music spoke for him and, in the mid-1950s, it spoke volumes. As Marty Stuart, a country performer and historian and collector of country music, said, “If you go back to his 1950s recordings of *Cry, Cry, Darling* and *Seasons of My Heart*, you’ll witness a country music architect at work. He was a brilliant singer, a brilliant designer of country music.” Newman put together a string of four top ten country recordings, and the Opry beckoned. He arrived as a member in August 1956 (Cooper).

Newman was successful, but that success also was limited for a variety of reasons. The following year, he recorded his biggest hit, “A Fallen Star,” which reached #2 on the country charts, and he split a gold record with Ferlin Husky, who covered his recording. Husky’s version climbed to eighth on the country charts but reached the pop charts as well, and thus became better known. Newman continued recording, first for Dot and MGM Records and finally, starting in 1961, for the more widely distributed Decca label. But he often remained stuck between the country of fiddles and steel and

2 On these other performers, see Escott, Ewing, Schlappi, and Smith. Newman later went on to record “Jambalaya”; interestingly, Williams first offered the song to Hank Snow, who turned it down (Snow with Ownbey and Burris 371-72). Ironically, Snow was born in Nova Scotia. See also R. Brasseaux (159).

the increasingly popular Nashville Sound, with its strings, even on his own label: Owen Bradley, his producer, also recorded Kitty Wells, a traditionalist known as the “Queen of Country Music,” and Patsy Cline, whose songs were country but sounded more like popular music. Newman reached the top ten six more times after *A Fallen Star*, but never had a #1 hit and often wound up lower on the national country charts. Although he continued to record for most of the rest of his life, he never appeared again on the country charts after 1970 (Cooper).

But even as he was enjoying success, Newman began reaching back to his roots. As country music historian Bill C. Malone put it, Newman “was never very happy in the role of pop singer and, largely through the influence of the urban folk enthusiasm, he returned to the performance of Cajun-country songs.” Newman had recorded Miller’s “Diggy-Liggy-Lo” back in 1954, long before fellow Cajun Doug Kershaw had a hit with it, but had stayed with country through 1961. He released a single, “Big Mamou,” named for the area where he grew up; it was in some ways a typical country lament—“Why did you go and leave me in Big Mamou?/You left me for another, left me alone and so blue”—but with the up-tempo style associated with Cajun music. In 1962, he reached #22 on the Billboard charts with *Alligator Man*, which became his theme song and included Cajun-style fiddling (Malone 282-83).

Then, in 1963, he released his third album, *Folk Songs of the Bayou Country*, which was more historic than probably even he realized. It was country music’s first mainstream album of Cajun music, and a “concept” album, which was rare for its time—and, indeed, gets too little attention historically for that status. The theme song was the decidedly non-Cajun “Louisiana Purchase” by a composer with a limited track record in country and Cajun music: Irving Berlin, who wrote

it for a 1941 Broadway musical made into a film starring Bob Hope. Newman's album featured such Cajun classics as "Jole Blon" and two waltzes, "Gran Chenier" and "Gran Basile." The album included an emcee, Opry announcer T. Tommy Cutrer, who had known Newman in Shreveport and gave him a new middle name to replace Yves: he called him Jimmy C., for Cajun. Besides interacting with Cutrer to provide information about Cajun culture, Newman also relied on two outstanding Cajun musicians: old friend Rufus Thibodeaux, whom he always called the greatest of the Cajun fiddlers, and accordion player Shorty LeBlanc. Newman also reached #12 on the country charts with "Bayou Talk," a combination of singing and Cajun comedy about "my good 'frand,' Romancey Bordeaux" (*Folk Songs of the Bayou Country*).

The album and single, historians of country and Cajun music agree, did a great deal to bring attention to Cajun culture. Newman remained a mainstream country performer, but integrated more Cajun music and culture into his act. Finally, in 1974, Newman took a major career step. Surveying Cajun history, Ryan Brasseaux writes, "Adaptation is a hallmark of the Cajun survival strategy." As longtime music journalist and historian John Broven put it, with "synthetic country-pop productions taking second place to the earthy outlaw sound" in country music, Newman had "nothing to lose." At about the same time that he joined other longtime artists in forming the Association of Country Entertainers—one of them, Bill Anderson, called the Country Music Association giving its award for outstanding female vocalist to Olivia Newton-John "the straw that broke the camel's back"—Newman recorded an album for a small label, La Louisianne, *Jimmy C. Newman Sings Cajun*, featuring several Cajun standards and a new song, "Lache Pas La Patate," a Cajun phrase that makes more sense in its rhetorical meaning—"Don't give

up” or “Hang in there”—than in its literal translation, “Don’t drop the potato.” The song sold more than 200,000 copies in Canada and earned Newman the first gold record of his career (see, for example, R. Brasseaux vii; Broven 63-64; Carlin 289; Carr 355-56; Malone).

Newman had indeed gone back to his roots. In 1974, he headlined the first concert that turned into the Festival Acadiens et Creoles in Lafayette. As one Cajun performer in the area put it, “Jimmy was the guy that brought people in, then people got to hear all this other music.” Barry Ancelet, the festival organizer and a scholar of Cajun culture and music, noted, “We figured he was going to be a big draw because of the popularity of that song and also he was a well-loved person. A lot of people from here knew he was from here and knew that he’d gone to Nashville and represented us with great dignity up there.” Other Cajun musicians agreed: as one of them, Happy Fats, put it, “Jimmy is very well thought of down here ... because Jimmy has been pretty much help and he hasn’t forgotten his Cajun traditions” (*Billboard*; Cross; Fuselier).

Although Newman continued to sing his old hits in his shows and included some country songs in his albums, he turned almost completely to Cajun music. Thibodeaux joined him full-time, as did Newman’s son Gary, who had performed with a Cajun-rock group called Coteau, and, in 1977, Bessyl Duhon, the son of legendary Cajun musician Hector Duhon and a former member of the rising Cajun group Beausoleil, became his accordion player. Newman called the band Cajun Country, reflecting its—and his—hybrid music. Thibodeaux worked with Newman on and off until his death in 2005, while Duhon continued until Newman’s death—in fact, Duhon’s tenure as a musician as part of a Grand Ole Opry act appears to be the longest in the show’s history except

for dobro player Beecher Kirby, “Bashful Brother Oswald,” who worked with Roy Acuff for almost 54 years (Broven, Cooper).³

For the rest of Newman’s career, his recordings were mostly albums and mostly Cajun, and his touring shows were almost entirely Cajun music—except for “Cajun Cowboy,” his take on the western songs he loved in his youth, and occasional country songs, either his hits or new material. He spotlighted Duhon and either Thibodeaux or other fiddlers. He recorded a few singles, including a minor mid-1980s hit, “Don’t Mess with My Toot-Toot.” He gained a large number of fans in Europe, especially in England, where traditional country music remained more popular than in the United States, at least commercially. He also appeared at bluegrass festivals, noting that “Cajun and bluegrass are both traditional music that runs parallel, and the same people usually enjoy them both”; indeed, Bill Monroe recorded Newman’s first hit “Cry, Cry, Darling,” and Newman’s description of Cajun music could apply to bluegrass: “It has two speeds: off and full-blast.” While the Grand Ole Opry’s management reduced most of the older acts’ appearances to monthly by the early 2000s, Newman continued weekly on either the Friday or Saturday night shows, his music providing a unique counterpoint to the other artists appearing there (“Newman Changed the Way We Listen to Cajun Bluegrass”).

Like many country singers, Newman sought influence and financial success beyond the stage, and he found it. His influence extended into the Nashville recording industry. In the

3 The reference to Duhon’s tenure is based on much reading about the Grand Ole Opry. In addition to Kirby, harmonica and piano player Jimmie Riddle worked with Acuff from 1943 until his death in 1982, but was away during part of World War II; fiddle Howard “Howdy” Forrester worked with Acuff for most of the period from 1951 to 1987.

early 1960s, he teamed up with fellow singer Dave Dudley and country music business executive Jimmy Key to form Newkeys Music, which became a leading Nashville publishing company. One of its biggest hits was Dudley's "Six Days on the Road," a truck-driving anthem that Newman also sang on the Opry, but sought someone else to record because, as he put it with his Cajun French accent, he sounded nothing like a truck driv-*air*. He offered it to several artists, including Johnny Cash, who expressed concern about the driver saying, "I'm taking little white pills, and my eyes are open wide"—as Newman himself agreed, an ironic statement, given Cash's history—before Dudley recorded it (West, "Jimmy C Newman").

But the most important writer in the Newkeys catalog was Tom T. Hall. Newman and Key brought Hall to Nashville. His first charted song was "D.J. for a Day," which reached #9 in 1963. After that, Hall wrote some of Newman's bigger songs, including "Artificial Rose" (#8 in 1965), "Back Pocket Money" (#10 in 1966), and two songs related to Cajun life, "Louisiana Saturday Night" (#24 in 1967) and "Boo Dan," about Cajun sausage (#31 in 1969). More importantly for Newman, Hall also wrote "Harper Valley P.T.A." and several other hits while with Newkeys. Newman sold his share of the company in 1970. While Key continued in the business—and went on to appear as an interviewee in Ken Burns's documentary on country music—he had the money to fulfill a dream: a 670-acre cattle ranch outside of Nashville, where he rode his horse with an antique saddle that Hall gave him, and which he called Singing Hills in honor of a song by Autry. There he and his wife Mae, to whom he was married for 65 years, hosted, as he called them, "soirees" featuring abundant Cajun food (Braddock 202; Duncan and Burns 265; Hagan 211; Oermann, Rio 144-46).

That Newman remembered his background, both Cajun and country, reflected his awareness of his history in general. Late in life, he recalled his first home in Nashville as “a converted garage apartment,” and therefore tried to help the next generation of artists. In the early 1970s, he brought a young Louisianan, Eddy Raven, to Nashville, where he became a songwriter for Acuff-Rose and a chart-topper as both a songwriter and singer. His company published early songs by Bobby Braddock, to whom Newman offered encouragement; Braddock went on to be inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame for his songwriting. He provided a job as a bass player to Dana Williams, who became one of the leaders of the popular contemporary country group Diamond Rio. When Marty Stuart was trying to make it as a singer after a long career as an instrumentalist with Lester Flatt and Johnny Cash, Newman gave him a yellow stage suit so that he could look the part—appropriately, given that Newman was among those artists who wore the “Nudie Suits” designed by Hollywood clothier Nudie Cohn, with Newman’s featuring alligators. When Charley Pride became only the second African American to join the Grand Ole Opry as a member, he requested that Newman induct him (Laborde).

Newman’s most famous example of helping another artist came in 1959. A twelve-year-old from East Tennessee visited the Opry, walked up to Newman backstage, introduced herself, and said she wanted to sing. Newman walked over to the segment host, Cash, and told him that he would give up his second number to the girl, whose name he had to double-check. She replied, “Dolly Parton.” Newman later claimed not to remember that moment, but Parton included him on her network television shows and booked him into her Dollywood theme park, always thanking him for

giving her the chance to sing on the Opry for the first time (Cooper).⁴

The last time Newman's band appeared on the Opry was the week after his death—a rare tribute. Duhon played Newman's theme song, "Alligator Man," on his accordion, but a beat more slowly than usual, as a kind of dirge. At the time of his death, only three other artists had a longer consecutive tenure as Opry members. His name never appeared on suggested lists for membership in the Country Music Hall of Fame, but he had a distinguished career. More than that, by singing Cajun music at the national level, he helped bring it attention and popularity. Others have contributed to the awareness of the culture and food of the bayous of south Louisiana, but Jimmy C. Newman deserves to be remembered as one of them, and as one of the most important of them. As he said, "as an entertainer I consider myself a country-Cajun. A Cajun identifies very strongly with tradition." Newman both upheld that tradition and expanded it. As one Louisiana journalist noted, "he took a distinct regional music sung in a different language and popularized it before a national audience Jimmy C. Newman put Cajun music on a national stage" (Laborde).

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Octavia in Vegas: Teaching Octavia Butler in a Las Vegas Classroom

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by Briana Whiteside

ABSTRACT

“Octavia in Vegas,” explores my experiences with teaching science fiction writer Octavia Butler in the English classroom. The article reveals the syllabus construction, student resistance and responses to Butler’s works, and how we interpreted her significance in popular culture. It also interrogates possible limitations of the course, such as how the material was taught and my teaching methods.

Keywords: Octavia Butler, science fiction, Afrofuturism, teaching

Octavia in Vegas: Enseñando a Octavia Butler en un aula de Las Vegas

RESUMEN

“Octavia in Vegas”, explora mis experiencias con la enseñanza de la escritora de ciencia ficción Octavia Butler en el aula de inglés. El artículo revela la construcción del plan de estudios, la resistencia de los estudiantes y las respuestas a las obras de Butler, y cómo interpretamos su importancia en la cultura popular. También interroga posibles limitaciones del curso, como cómo se enseñó el material y mis métodos de enseñanza.

Palabras clave: Octavia Butler, Ciencia ficción, Afro futurismo, enseñanza

奥克塔维娅在维加斯：在拉斯维加斯的一间课堂里教授奥克塔维娅·巴特勒

摘要

“奥克塔维娅在维加斯”这门课探索了我的体验，即在英语课堂中教授科幻小说作家奥克塔维娅·巴特勒（Octavia Butler）。本文展示了教学大纲的组成、学生对巴特勒作品的抵触和反馈、以及我们如何诠释她在流行文化中的重要性。本文还探究了这门课程可能存在的限制，例如课程材料的教授方式和我的教学方式。

关键词：奥克塔维娅·巴特勒，科幻小说，非洲未来主义，教学

At its best, science fiction stimulates imagination and creativity. It gets reader and writer off the beaten track, off the narrow, narrow footpath of what ‘everyone’ is saying, doing, thinking—whoever ‘everyone’ happens to be this year. And what good is this to Black people?”

—Octavia Butler

In Spring 2019, at The University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), I taught an African American Literature course on science fiction writer Octavia Butler. The course, *The Octavia Butler Mixtape: An African American Sci-fi Timeline*, was an upper division class. With the resurgence of interest in Butler’s work, coupled with popular culture’s fascination with artificial intelligence, altered states of being, and communicating and knowing, I believed that a course on black

science fiction would be timely. UNLV's large minority demographic and geographical location, just blocks away from the Las Vegas Strip, which offers unique forms of reality just beyond the university walls, also encouraged hope that students would understand and appreciate the science fiction experiences happening in close proximity to the university.

This, of course, was not the case on the first day of class when I announced to students that we would use the first black, female, sci-fi writer as a lens to think about African American experiences on American soil and beyond. The confusion and disappointment was apparent on the faces of many students at the mention of science fiction, a genre with which many could not relate because in their minds science fiction meant *Star Wars* and/or *Star Trek*.¹ In fact, one African American student raised her hand and remarked, "I thought that this was an African American literature course." Other students nodding in agreement signaled to me that we had much work to do to decolonize notions of the genre and examining how inserting black bodies into narratives that imagined new futures for humanity disrupted the stability of science fiction.

Admittedly, the distance that some students of color experience with reading science fiction has roots in the historical weaponization of the genre that continued marginal attacks on African Americans. For instance, Ytasha Womack asserts that "it was an age-old joke that blacks in sci-fi movies from the '50s through the '90s typically had a dour fate ... black characters in films popped up as the silent, mystical type or maybe a scary witch doctor, but it was fairly clear that in the artistic renderings of the future by pop culture standards, people of color weren't factors at all" (7), explaining why

1 When I asked students about their hesitancy to approaching the genre, they admitted that they did not like the movies *Star Wars* or *Star Trek*.

black people generally resist the genre. However, the official histories of African Americans gesture toward a science fiction nightmare, whether through branding, forced sterilization, the Tuskegee experiment, Tasers, or other technologies of horror performed on black bodies. How, then, are we able to bridge discussions pertaining to history, literature, and popular culture in the classroom? A course on Octavia Butler might provide some answers.

In order to disarm students, I asked about the technology of the iPhone, a communication device that offers the FaceTime video calling function, and the Apple Watch, a smart watch that allows you to communicate with another person from your wrist. Less than fifteen years ago, FaceTime and the capability to talk on a watch were imaginings of the 1960s show *The Jetsons*. We also explored the digitization of news media and the current rise of robot assistants in stores like Walmart and at hotels on the Las Vegas Strip. In essence, what students have come to accept as normal were once science fiction visions. From there, we examined the Las Vegas Strip and the hyperreality that it provides visitors and residents. Why do so many people enjoy visiting Las Vegas? In short, it affords an experience like nowhere else: it is a place and a non-place simultaneously. While New York is known as the city that never sleeps, and Times Square provides a unique experience for tourists, Las Vegas does so even more. It offers a legal space to explore sexuality, consumption, and alterities of time, space, and culture. Individuals travelling from other areas of the United States either move forward or backwards in time once they arrive in Nevada. From the architecture to the to light shows, the Las Vegas Strip momentarily promises tourists the freedom of utopian living and a science fiction dream.

In addition, we examined the promises of the present-day Afrofuturism movement and the importance of imagining

black people in the future. Students were familiar with artists such as OutKast and the *ATLiens* album; the image and Afrocentric philosophies of Erykah Badu; Lil Wayne's song "Phone Home," where he admits, "We are not the same, I am a Martian"; Michael Jackson's moon walk; Nikki Minaj's song "Spaceships" and the accompanying video; and Janelle Monáe's *Archandroid* album and aesthetic. However, they struggled with connecting the technologies that they used daily to their proximity to the Strip and the music with which they were familiar. My course sought to bridge the gaps and also introduce them to science fiction by way of a culture in which they were already immersed.

THE COURSE, SYLLABUS, AND STRUCTURE

Octavia Butler's literary corpus includes twelve novels and nine short stories. In a sixteen-week course, instructors have to be strategic about which texts to include and the rationale behind them. Since my goals were to introduce students to the first black female science fiction writer, bridge the gap between literature and popular culture, and examine black history and futures, I decided to teach texts that correspond to the timeline of the African American literary canon as represented in the Norton Anthology of African American literature: Oral Traditions; Slavery and Freedom; Reconstruction; Harlem Renaissance, Realism, Naturalism, and Modernism; Black Arts; and the Contemporary period. We read Butler's texts in the following order: *Wild Seed* (1980), *Kindred* (1979), *Mind of My Mind* (1977), *Fledgling* (2005), *Bloodchild and Other Stories* (2005), *Clay's Ark* (1984), *Patternmaster* (1976), *Parable of the Sower* (1993), *Dawn* (1987). This structure allowed me to thematically anchor Butler within a tradition of black literary thought, but also position her within more productive discussions about individual responsi-

bility, future cultural responsibility, and social and political agency, which are all aims of Afrofuturism.

The Octavia Butler Mixtape course had twenty-nine students. Of the twenty-nine students, fifteen were of color, six were men, and twenty-three were women. There were fourteen non-English majors who were unfamiliar with the reading-intensive nature of the English classroom, providing many moments of tension. The class was held on Monday and Wednesday from 2:30-3:45pm, and we usually read the texts over three class periods. The time of the course, gender imbalance, and diversity of majors and students provided unique experiences and discussions in the classroom. My intersectional identity as a young black female assistant professor—and the only black woman in my department—may have also created tensions. One student mentioned that she had never taken a course at UNLV taught by a black woman in the English department. This article recounts my educational experiences with teaching a course on science fiction writer Octavia Butler in Las Vegas, less than four hours from her home of Pasadena, California.

Some of the course's goals were to help students attain a broad understanding of African American literary history from slavery to beyond the twenty-first century and develop an understanding of African American literary traditions as a progressive art form and how those forms lead to the contemporizing of themes, motifs, and ideologies that help to shape Afrofuturism. I also sought to help students strengthen their analytical reading and critical thinking skills, especially as they relate to issues of ideology, identity, and difference. Students were responsible for completing daily reading quizzes, a midterm, a final paper, and co-leading classroom discussion with me. They were required to email me twenty-four hours

prior to their presentation date three to four discussion questions on their text. One of the questions needed to adhere to the thematic breakdown to which the book corresponds.

**BUTLER, CLASS DISCUSSIONS,
AND STUDENT RESPONSES**

Kindred (1979), a novel that explores slavery and the antebellum South, is a general entry to Butler's writings; however, in an African American literary course that begins with the exploration of black life prior to the Middle Passage, I began with the neo-slave narrative, *Wild Seed* (1980). *Wild Seed* follows Anyanwu—a 350-year-old oracle—as she migrates from a small Neolithic community outside of an Ibo village, to the shores of Africa where Africans are sold, through the Middle Passage, to eighteenth century New England and United States—more specifically Wheatley, New York, where she ends up living on the Wheatley plantation. By the end of the novel, Anyanwu eventually arrives at Avoyelles Parish plantation in nineteenth-century Southern Louisiana, and then relocates to California. The narrative begins in 1680 and ends around 1858 before the Civil War and tracks an unlikely emotional/tense/strained affair between Anyanwu, a shape-shifter, and Doro, a vampire-like body-snatching spirit entity who is intent on establishing a superhuman race by selectively breeding those who have special abilities.

Wild Seed provides coverage of African American oral traditions, African spirituality, folklore, the Middle Passage, migration, and the experiences of the enslaved in the early Americas. Students were able to imagine life in Africa for a black woman prior to the commodification of her body and exploitation of her sexuality on American soil. The Middle Passage scenes in the text offer room to not only understand ex-

periences during the voyage, but also contemplate the power of African spirituality and bodily agency through Anyanwu's shape-shifting capability. Although students were initially uncomfortable with the "weird[ness]" of the protagonist changing into animal and other racialized persons, discussions surrounding black female bodies moved beyond degradation and into possibility. We discussed the value of Butler expanding the slave and migration narrative to include a black woman who can move metaphysically. On the last day of *Wild Seed's* discussion, students admitted that they enjoyed how Butler "expands representation of black characters," "decenters dominant historical accounts that are covered in history classes," and "[her] exploration of power because we [students] are tired of reading about black weakness." The majority of students also revealed that they finished the text ahead of schedule and were struggling during classroom discussions not to talk about the scenes that their peers did not yet have knowledge of.

Continuing with the themes of migration and enslavement, we read Butler's most well known work, *Kindred*. The neo-slave narrative investigates and challenges notions of enslavement through the protagonist, Edana (Dana) Franklin, a twenty-six-year-old black woman who is consistently snatched from 1976 California back into 1800s Maryland to ensure the survival of her "several times great grandfather" (28) Rufus Weylin, a white slave holder. While her surface goal is to save Rufus' life, her underlying task is to guarantee that Rufus rapes her several times great-grandmother, Alice Greenwood, a black woman, to enable her birth decades later. Dana can neither anticipate when Rufus will call her from the twentieth century nor be certain that she will survive her time in the past. Ultimately, the only thing that allows Dana to escape 1800s Maryland is the fear of losing her life.

However, the longer that she spends in the past, the more she learns to adapt to its living conditions and the expectations of African Americans, which makes it more difficult to scare her back to the future/present.²

Kindred did many things for students. On the one hand, it allowed them to “feel slavery,” which was Butler’s goal; allowing readers to feel the emotions, smell the aromas, and internalize the fears of slavery.³ In fact, one student struggled to articulate how “snatching black folks back to the past” was hard for him to experience because it forced him to come to terms with the “temporality” of his own body. On the other hand, it offered students space to contemplate the long-lasting, present-day effects of enslavement on the minds and bodies of the descendants of the enslaved through Dana’s teleportation back to modern society. Students examined how “historical trauma” revisits the lives of people today, and how Butler uses memory as a portal between the past and the present. In addition, they expressed extreme dislike for Tom Weylin and his son Rufus, which is understandable, but not without considering the demands of slavery on the Southern planter class. In all, students unapologetically grappled with

2 I use the binary future/present to illustrate the uncertainty of time in the novel. While Butler writes that the past is 1800s and the future is 1976, as time lapses in the narrative, it is difficult to adhere to Butler’s concept of time. In essence, one could read *Kindred* devoid of Butler’s timestamp and imagine that Dana is propelled into a future psychological state when she is near death, and the future projection allows her space to fantasize about a new version of herself. Such a reading is not farfetched, if the psychological trauma of the enslaved is considered.

3 In an interview with Nick DiChario, Octavia Butler explains that her goal in writing *Kindred* was to make people feel the book, because it was something that she had never seen a writer accomplish. She continues to say that, “That’s the point of taking a modern day black person and making her experience slavery, not as just a matter of one-on-one but going back and being part of the whole system” (206). For the complete interview, see DiChario (206-212).

America's complex history and treatment of black bodies in a way that did not distance them from her history, but enticed them to bear witness and critically analyze America's dark past.

For Reconstruction, we read *Mind of My Mind* (1977) and *Fledgling* (2005). In African American literature, in addition to examinations of the New South post-Civil War, the Reconstruction era focused on African American uplift through literacy and language. Some of the guiding questions for this unit were: How do ancestral ways of knowing dismantle notions of African American illiteracy and inferiority? How do alternative forms of literacy and knowledge-gathering help African Americans combat objectivity and assert agency?

As the sequel to *Wild Seed*, *Mind of My Mind* continues the legacy of the shape-shifter Anyanwu and spirit-man Doro. In *Mind of My Mind*, Doro's vision for a superhuman race of being is fulfilled, but not by his own doing. In fact, his twenty-year-old "experimental model" (278) telepath daughter, Mary, creates a community of superhuman people and holds them in a mental pattern that she controls. As a "complete version of [Doro]" (448), Mary has the ability to communicate telepathically with hundreds of people and create a new form of literacy that privileges those who have this special ability. In the text, Butler dismantles the illiteracy stigma associated with African Americans and reveals the power behind the ways that black people create alternative forms of meaning and communication.

Mind of My Mind was a difficult text to teach because it was not as straightforward as *Wild Seed* and *Kindred*. In fact, *Mind of My Mind* is one of Butler's most understudied texts because of the telepathy and the fact that the narrative stretch-

es readers to draw connections that are not readily available. In other words, Butler spoon-feeds readers in several of her works, but with *Mind of My Mind*, readers have to come to the table on their own. I approached the idea of literacy and speculative literacy by building on the ways that African Americans produce knowledge outside of institutional ways of knowing. I started with sharing about the fluidity of what is understood as literacy and how it has long been a topic of debate in scholarly discourse.

On a large scale, literacy, historically situated, has been measured by one's ability to read and write. In fact, in several of cognitive researchers' historical studies, the researchers reason that people who conduct meaning within oral communities are illiterate.⁴ I explained to students how the criteria by which African Americans have been/are measured—compared to Westernized societies—have constructed a flawed knowledge base within mainstream cultures. I am referring to the tradition of criticizing and misunderstanding black intellectual practices and knowledge production, and how the inappropriateness of measuring African American cultures by a set of “literate” standards that have been traditionally anti-black further complicates the lives of those who produce meaning in other forms. I wanted the class to understand why Butler chose to move away from the written text and book learning and toward African American literacy through attention to telepathy, gestures, artifacts, and memory. I also encouraged students to think of telepathy as a form of coded speech—a vernacular form gesturing toward orality—and the benefits of communicating in a privileged way that is similar to African American Vernacular English (AAVE).

4 For the ways that literacy has been conceptualized as one's ability to read and write, see Ong, Goody, and Olson.

While getting students enthusiastic about *Mind of My Mind* was a bit difficult because it did not immediately “involve action,” the literacy discussions were fruitful. We were able to discuss the limitations of institutional literacy and access for African Americans and interrogate how knowledge is produced and disseminated in ways that create intellectual biases toward minority groups. From there, we talked about how African Americans have often turned to communal literacies, such as those produced in social spaces, as illustrated in songs and stories, especially during Reconstruction, to prepare individuals for survival or how to act. African American speech practices, such as African American Language (AAL) and AAVE or “Ebonics,” have equipped black people with alternative forms of knowledge that assist in navigating within and outside of black communities, and we used this to examine Mary’s and the Patternists’ rise to power.⁵

With an understanding of social literacy and how Butler reimagines communication inside and out of black spaces, we examined how Mary’s mental strand establishes and enhances the effectiveness of the telepath community by bringing them together in a way that was not previously possible.⁶ The pattern is a cerebral web that forms while transitioning from a powerless person to a superhuman being. The psychological link is explained as a mind-shifting phenomena that locks other powerful telepaths into her head when Mary becomes aware of their presence, which had not been previously possible for any other telepath. Through the pattern, telepathy functions as a substitute for the institutional practices of learning, such as book reading and even speech. For example,

5 African American English, AAL, AAVE, and Ebonics are used interchangeably to describe the ways in which African Americans use speech practices that deviate from Standard English.

6 I use the phrase *social literacy* to describe one’s ability to learn outside of classroom settings.

in the same way that history books and diaspora writers attempt to educate through writing and rewriting history, Mary uses the pattern to inform and liberate telepaths from their identity crisis. The benefit of the telepathic way of knowing is that it eliminates suspiciousness or skewed intentions of secondhand information. For instance, Mary explains that once the information is transferred, “it wouldn’t have been easy for [people] to disbelieve information force-fed directly into their minds” (389). We also thought about the possibility of returning to African American Verbal Traditions (AVT), a branch of AAL that, according to Williams-Farrier, “... exceed[s] the verbal to include non-verbal ... communication” (220), and contemplated the healing that it might offer black people. At the end of *Mind of My Mind*, which no one rushed to finish, students explained that they were beginning to understand “the importance of education and literacy.” They shared about how they create meaning within their own communities, and the very real limitations of institutional literacy for their personal survival.

In the vein of alternative literacies, I used the vampire novel *Fledgling* to explore familial literacy. The narrative is a vampire parable about race, science, literacy, and identity. The protagonist Shori Matthews is the lost child of the ancient Ina species, a group of near-immortal beings who have a hunger for blood. As an experimental model, Shori has been genetically engineered to have dark skin in an attempt to find ways to limit vampirical vulnerability during the day. The immobility of the Ina species during daylight makes them susceptible to human attack and extermination. Shori is an anomaly, one that gives pause to some of the white vampire founding families that are against accepting her black body. For example, not only is the Silk Ina family afraid of a day-walking being, but they are also fearful of the racial implications of accepting

Shori's black body. As a result, they exterminate both sides of her family and leave her with a bad case of amnesia. Butler highlights and glorifies the importance of melanin in the skin, but more importantly, draws attention to the tensions of racism through attention to folkloric themes, such as creation stories, rumors, myths, and stereotypes, which all lend themselves to historical knowledge gathering practices for African Americans. Overall, Shori's survival and difference signal a sense of hope in prolonging a species that is in danger of becoming extinct.

In Shori's quest to (re)learn the history of her family, she is provided with various teaching tools. The legacy of Ina is racially white, whose written history reaches back "more than ten thousand years" (130), and they are one of a fading species intent on discovering a way to survive extinction. While the Ina written tradition covers 400 generations and is available within the community, when Shori wakes, she is positioned within an oral community where she gains knowledge of ancestral roots through stories and verbal history lessons due to the urgency of her investigation in identifying her family's murderers. In forcing Shori to (re)learn the traditions of her male and female families, Butler uses the erasure of the written tradition of the white Ina to teach Shori in a realm that more closely aligns with her historical identity, which ultimately leads to the conviction of her family's murderers.

Some students admitted that Butler's *Fledgling* was "weird." Although they appreciated television shows that explored vampirism, such as *The Vampire Diaries*, experiencing vampirism on the page gave them pause. There were also students who explained that they did not prefer the long descriptive passages illuminating Shori's learning process and wanted Butler to get to the point, much like in *Mind of My Mind*. In

essence, students were growing impatient with the slow process of learning and had a desire for Butler to tell them what they needed to know. This reveals their own internal frustrations with educational processes. And what did they need to know? What do African Americans who are still struggling to come to terms with the forced dislocation of black bodies following the Middle Passage need to know? The amnesia that Shori experiences prompted a lively discussion on what it means to unknow and not know in ways that destabilized our reader superiority as knowers of knowledge. We were also able to explore the ramifications of what it means for African Americans to be robbed of their identity, and how several black people still struggle to overcome those fractures in their identity.

Butler's *Bloodchild and Other Stories* provided a nice transition to the Harlem Renaissance. The text includes nine short stories and two essays, which helped to explain the intellectual, social, and artistic aims of the New Negro Movement. Since this was a moment in African American culture where writers explored sexual freedoms and possibilities in their writings, it made sense to take a break from Butler's longer works and introduce students to some of her shorter writings—especially since her novels are generally privileged over her short stories. In this section, we read “Speech Sounds,” *Bloodchild*,” “The Book of Martha,” and “The Evening the Morning and the Night,” but I highlight our discussions on “Speech Sounds” here.

Since we had just completed the literacy section, students were able to comment on Butler's attention to literacy and the dangers of universal literacy in “Speech Sounds.” In the narrative, Butler completely deconstructs historical notions of literacy as an imperialist, patriarchal society defines it. The

narrative explores the universal loss of verbal literacy and explores the ways that humans attempt to communicate past barriers. The story is set in California following a worldwide epidemic that, although initially blamed on the Soviets, has no known cause or cure. The epidemic, known as “the silence” (106), is an illness that is “highly specific ... [where] language was always lost or severely impaired ... often there was also paralysis, intellectual impairment, [and] death” (96). Some of the victims suddenly lose their capacity to write and read; others can still read but not speak and some have lost both privileges. Some can do both, but are unable remember what words mean, such as the African American protagonist Valerie Rye.

Students were prepared to talk about Butler’s decision to construct language barriers in “Speech Sounds.” They were willing to explore how we currently have language barriers between social, ethnic, and literate classes. One student mentioned “the fragility of institutional literacy” and how his own language barriers contribute to a personal sense of “social death.” For many students, “Speech Sounds” brought to the surface their personal communication limitations, especially when they attempt to communicate with teachers and peers of different ethnic backgrounds. Many revealed that they struggle to be understood and have anxieties around having their ideas misinterpreted. This was especially true with non-students of color who were reading black literature for the first time in my course.

Moreover, in an attempt to capture the racial unrest and emotion of black writers between the 1940s and 1970s, I assigned *Clay’s Ark*. *Clay’s Ark’s* premise engages familiar narratives of invasion and racial infection—Eli is a black man who introduces a foreign virus into the world.

Told in flashbacks, the narrative reveals the story of Asa Elias (Eli) Doyle, an African American boyhood minister, former geologist, astronaut, and only survivor of the fourteen-crew spaceship that returned to Earth from the “Second planet of Proxima Centauri” (490). Proxima Centauri is “A cool red star with its three planets hugging in close around it” (521). However, Eli is not alone; he carries an extraterrestrial virus known as Proxi Two that forces the host to infect others.⁷ Set in the Arizona desert in 2021, survival of the fittest is an underlying theme in the story, as the infected must learn to respond to the promptings of the organism controlling their bodies, while attempting to avoid death due to their new abnormality. By historical societal standards, Eli is a monster both ethnically and aesthetically, due to body politics.

In *Monsters of America: Our Historical Obsession with the Hideous and the Haunting* (2013), W. Scott Poole suggests that, “American monsters are born out of American history ... [these monsters] are living representations of our darkness. Simultaneously metaphors and progenitors of the American way of fear and violence. These are creatures of American history. Their many permutations in folklore ... are impossible to explain without that complex history” (4). Butler builds on the historical fears of boundary-crossing bodies and examines how America responds to them. We used the term *monster* to give fear a face, and explored the ways that black bodies have been seen as worthy of destruction due to color and labeling. We used the terms monstrous and monstrosity to examine white people’s immoral acts upon black bodies, such as lynching, castrations, and Jim Crow laws, to name

7 The Proxi Two disease is spread through bodily contact, usually via scratching. It incubates for approximately three days within its new hosts before it completely takes over their bodies. The incubation period is so dangerous that newly infected beings generally die while being transformed into Clay Arks.

a few, and how they correspond to the text. Considering these historical occurrences through a speculative vein, we explored how African Americans have been physically and psychologically impacted, how white people have responded to black presences, and how black people have found ways to heal in spite of systems of oppression. Three guiding questions for this section were: How is history brought to bear on the backs of black or othered bodies? How does racism directly impact or control black bodies? Who are the monsters and what are monstrous acts?

Clay's Ark is another one of Butler's underexplored texts and I wanted to bring more awareness to the text. Like with *Mind of My Mind*, students were resistant and they were not shy to inform me that they "did not like this story." Students expressed frustration with Butler's decision to alternate between the past and the present in the text. Though it worked in *Kindred*, it failed *Clay's Ark*. They were also uncomfortable with the hypersexuality in the text and questioned why Butler explored sexuality so heavily. The only black male student in the class suggested that the narrative was slightly pornographic. "Was Butler sexually frustrated?" he asked. In her notes at The Huntington Library, Butler does admit sexual frustration around the time she was writing *Clay's Ark*, but I was not aware of her admittance until I visited the Butler archive months after the class ended. I also glossed over the sexual nature of the text in preparing for the course because I was more focused on the opportunities that the organism provided and Butler's attention to how bodies survive and thrive in a culture that deems their presence deviant. However, I was shortsighted and did not consider how the organism forced the infected to be hypersexual through its prevention of monogamy and celibacy.

In *Clay's Ark*, we also studied the curing nature of tolerance for othered bodies. One student posed to the class through her discussion question: "In *Clay's Ark*, humans carrying the parasite are considered monstrous to the outsiders. Later, we learn that infected individuals seem to be immune from any other disease. What statement might Butler be making about racism? Does tolerance have any 'curing' properties?" The question allowed students to discuss white privilege, separatism, and even survival techniques of minority groups. Some white students revealed they benefit from white privilege, while others shared its negative impacts. In that particular moment, the class atmosphere grew tense, and in an attempt to neutralize the space, I redirected the discussion toward the privilege of health. Indeed, Butler is not only invested in examining racial tensions, but also bodily tensions, and how healthy, able-bodied individuals interpret and subconsciously perceive ailing and disabled bodies as monstrous. Shifting our focus to wellness and even how internalized racism affects wellness reopened space for students to participate in the discussion.

Patternmaster is the text that I assigned to teach students about the importance of intercommunal education, classism, and African American's intracommunal responsibilities corresponding to the Black Arts era. In the narrative, Teray, a Patternist, eventually learns that he is the son of the Patternmaster. A Patternmaster controls the mental web of beings that Mary created in *Mind of My Mind*.⁸ However, while he is the son of Rayal, the current Patternmaster, he must fight

8 Doro's daughter Mary, who appears in the sequel to *Wild Seed*, is the founder of the Pattern that Butler explores in *Patternmaster*. In *Mind of My Mind*, Mary creates a mental web that allows her to hold thousands of powerful telepaths in her mind and control their movements. I write extensively about the pattern and the power it yields in the literacy chapter of my dissertation.

for the position within the Patternist society against his older brother Coransee, who has mastered his mental capabilities. The familial tensions surrounding power in the text sets the stage for an in-depth understanding of the ways that black intra-communal movements and knowledge are essential, and also highlights how responsibility and healing capabilities coupled with mobility and political agency will guarantee liberation for the oppressed.

Students immediately noticed the political undertones in *Patternmaster*. Several of the student constructed discussion questions covered how the text highlights and connects to the disposability of black bodies in the work place, zone variances and redlining, education disparities, and black female agency. Since we were nearing the end of the semester, students were also able to make reference to several themes covered during the semester and draw links between Butler's texts. In essence, they had the unique ability to witness Butler signifying on herself, so to speak, because they spent a semester examining her body of work. Unfortunately, however, students were unimpressed with *Patternmaster*, the last book of the Patternist series, but Butler's first published novel. The Patternist series includes *Wild Seed*, *Mind of My Mind*, *Clay's Ark*, and *Patternmaster* in order of narrative plot. One student remarked that, although *Patternmaster* was easier to read than some of the other texts, it "was predictable." When I explained that it was Butler's first published novel and that she worked her way backwards to create the series, it did not change his initial feelings about the text, but another student commented on Butler's genius and unusual capability to create a series of books with interrelated characters and supporting figures that constitute close-knit communities, as well as distant, far-flung descendants.

With seven class periods remaining in the semester, we covered *Parable of the Sower* and *Dawn*. We explored Butler's significance in Donald Trump's America and the twenty-first century more broadly. Originally, I grappled with assigning *Parable of the Sower* because the Parable series are my least favorite books; to me, they are also the slowest-moving narratives. However, Butler's examination of climate change—she hoped the series would be cautionary—is timely. *Parable of the Sower* is set in the midst of an economic crisis due to climate change, increasing wealth inequality, and political greed. The institutions set in place to protect citizens either are no longer fulfilling their duties or charge outrageous prices to protect them. Citizens who are economically fortunate live in protective walled communities that also function to hold them prisoner in many respects. The “street poor—squatters winos, junkies, homeless people in general—are dangerous They cut off each other's ears, arms, legs They carry untreated diseases and festering wounds. They have no money to spend on water to wash with so even the unwounded have sores. They don't get enough to eat so they're malnourished—or they eat bad food and poison themselves” (10-11). Crime rates are at an all-time high, and where the church once provided solace, it is largely non-existent. The bildungsroman centers on fifteen-year-old Lauren Oya Olamina, a black girl who possesses what Butler identifies as hyperempathy syndrome, or “sharing,” which is the ability to feel pain and other sensations that she witnesses others experiencing. Lauren's condition is a result of her mother's use of the “Paracetco” (144),⁹ which “... screws around with people's

9 Butler explains, “... Paracetco began as a legitimate drug intended to help victims of Alzheimer's disease [but] Pyro was an accident. It was a homebrew—a basement drug invented by someone who was trying to assemble one of the other higher-priced street drugs. The inventor made a very small chemical mistake, and wound up with pyro” (*Sower* 144).

neurochemistry” (144) during pregnancy.¹⁰ Due to Lauren’s perceived failure of Christianity’s positive impact on society, she develops Earthseed and its principles through journal entries and verse that run counter to her understanding of Baptist teachings that she learned under the leadership of her Baptist preacher father.¹¹

Immediately, students mentioned the apocalyptic nature of *Parable*. For some, the text confronted their false sense of hope in humanity and the current imbalance of power in society. For others, the destruction of Lauren’s gated community destabilized how “safe” they felt in their own gated communities. *Parable of the Sower* also provided lively discussions on the importance and limitations of religion, the failures of doctrine, and fears of disability. I noticed that students appeared to be less happy while reading *Parable*. The dystopian nature of the text forced them to critically analyze the world in which they are currently living and the dangers of climate change. Some students willingly talked about their religious coping mechanisms and how before reading *Parable*, they had not had to think about how they contribute to the world’s destruction. During one discussion in particular, a student stated, “though we are creating our utopia of today, we are also creating tomorrow’s dystopia and that is the most frightening thing.” A few students agreed and others looked

10 Butler explains that Lauren’s hyperempathy is “... a kind of delusory defect that causes her to believe that she feels the pain of other people. She feels pain that she sees other people enduring. It is a delusion. It is a dangerous delusion because it prevents her, or could prevent her, from protecting herself in a very violent world” (“Octavia Butler” 163). See Williams (144).

11 The ways that Butler’s series is constructed through writings of verse, journal entries, and narrative voice mirror the structure of Jean Toomer’s *Cane*, which shifts between narrative prose, poetry, and passages of dialogue.

tired, so we ended the last day of *Parable's* discussion a few minutes early.

For this anticipated purpose, *Dawn* was strategically positioned as the last book that we would cover due to its exploration of post-humanness. In *Dawn*, Butler moves beyond Earth into outer space in efforts to combat legacies of oppression associated with the knowledge production of black people. As the first book of the *Xenogenesis/Lilith's Brood* trilogy, the narrative begins after humans wage a nuclear war that destroys the majority of humanity. Except for a few survivors, humans are well on their way to extinction, until the Oankali—a race of nomadic, gene trading alien species—pluck them from their destructive state on Earth. The main character, Lilith Iyapo, a black woman, wakes about 250 years later on an Oankali ship somewhere in space. Lilith's task is to help the Oankali colonize Earth by forcing the remaining humans to mate with them and produce hybrid beings known as constructs.¹² As a result, Lilith is genetically altered by the Oankali to give her supernatural strength, enhanced memory, and longevity of life, and she becomes a mother figure throughout the trilogy, living as a new human-Oankali hybrid. Human by birth and Oankali by genetic engineering, she straddles the human/Oankali divide and thus assists in eliminating the human contradiction, which Butler explains as a dangerous duality of hierarchy and intelligence operating in the lives of people.¹³ *Dawn* serves as a warning, a parable

12 Construct children are created from the genetic material of two human parents and the ooloi. A result of the historical mating practices of the Oankali and “a species of intelligent, schooling, fishlike creatures” (63), the genderless ooloi are humanity's and the Oankali's last hope of survival.

13 Butler explains that the human contradiction is the belief that intelligence and hierarchical behavior can coexist in the lives of humans. In essence, the contradiction hinders humans from achieving the freedom that they

of sorts, foreshadowing a destructive society where language and literacy fail and the human contradiction prevails.

The guiding question for *Dawn* pertaining to the possibility of post-humanness, as societies only hope for sustainability. Since *Parable* explores how humans destroy Earth and how uninhabitable it has become, *Dawn* flings readers into the future to imagine the prospect of the human race partnering with aliens. Students were interested in *Dawn* in ways that they were not interested in Butler's other texts. For instance, one student commented that *Dawn* "dealt with not only black issues but with human issues." Another student explained that the narrative "provides a new understanding of science and how technologies can change our genetic coding." Discussions on humanness, genetic coding, and science and technology revived students' energies at the end of the semester. They agreed with Butler about the human contradiction, but also trembled at humans' inability to "prolong the inevitable," which one student observed is the end of the world and partnership with "super aliens who resemble Doro from *Wild Seed* and *Mind of My Mind*."

OCTAVIA BUTLER, COURSE LIMITATIONS, AND POPULAR CULTURE

On the last day of class, I asked students about their experience with reading Octavia Butler for the entire semester. One student bravely admitted that she was "initially discouraged [when she discovered] that we were reading one author but [it proved to be] a rich experience reading [someone] other than Shakespeare." Another student explained that "[Butler] was ahead of her time" and that readers "have to read all of her work to fully appreciate her contribution to literature."

seek. Constructs, therefore, are free of this contradiction.

One student highlighted comparisons between Butler's works, comic books, and the Marvel universe, while another admitted that he "liked science fiction though [he] did not expect to." One student mentioned that she felt that Butler "had too many characters ... but appreciated reading about neighborhoods in California and Arizona" because she was familiar with them. These are a few examples of student responses from *The Octavia Butler Mixtape* course. Overall, the experience was positive, and students who were not literature majors even mentioned that they would be willing to take more English classes if instructors incorporated science fiction and popular culture into the syllabus.

Although student responses to the class and Butler's work were overwhelmingly positive, there were limitations and room for improvement. For example, in retrospect, it was the best idea to move in and out of the Patternist books in favor of the African American literary canon. While the series was not compiled until 2007, the compilation of the books in a series today encourages a clear reading progression. One student even expressed dissatisfaction with the order in which we read the books. Another possible limitation was my enthusiasm for Butler and her works. I discovered Butler in 2012 and wrote my Master's thesis and doctoral dissertation on her texts. My personal investment in her as an author and teacher could have silenced students from expressing their dislike for the texts that I preferred. Students were also at a disadvantage because they did not have access to the out-of-print novel *Survivor* (1978), which belongs to the Patternist series—over the years, Butler refused *Survivor's* reprinting.

Another thing that may have limited students' experience with Butler's texts and classroom discussion was my decision to start, but not finish, the *Parable* and *Xenogenesis* series.

Many wish that they had a machine to travel back to a time before November 8, 2016. The shock and unrest of several Americans during Donald Trump's campaign and after his election caused a sense of social anxiety within black communities. In essence, Trump's presidency prompted multiple people to (re)turn to Butler's *Parable* series for answers as to how America found herself with a president whom many deem racist. Butler's pessimistic outlook on America and her study of social trends allowed her to imagine a world in the midst of global warming, extremely high crime rates, and a president whose tagline is "Make America Great Again." While Gary Canavan asserts that Butler was channeling the Ronald Reagan era, questioning why Americans would elect and reelect him, the comparisons between the antagonist Andrew Steele and Donald Trump are noticeable. The chilling mirroring of the two in regard to religious intolerance, isolationism, and racial division causes readers to look to Butler not for escapism, but for knowledge and wisdom. Sadly, and rapidly, society has caught up to her *Parable* series, which is cast in the year 2032; she gave us a sixteen-year window to reach the current political climate. From the *Parables*, we learn that protests, education, and social justice are not enough, but that individuals must seek wisdom through partnering with a higher power, and this was not abundantly clear because we did not read *Parable of the Talents* (1998).

In all, we are in a current moment where there is an overwhelming interest in the black speculative body on screen or in print, and this includes Butler's works. Because history and culture have once again caught up with one another and people seek leaders in times of trouble, educators would gain much by including Butler on their syllabus. In spite of the progressive strides toward equality and change in America, we realize that much work still needs to be done, and Butler

helps us think through some of the steps of the process. I use her in the majority of my African American literature classes because she imagined worlds where black people were not the villains, but the saviors. Her black female protagonists serve as proof for those to come that black women can write science fiction and successfully so. And what good is that to black people and the literature classroom?

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“But If It Dies, It Produces Many Seeds”: Ritual Sacrifice in the Film *Midsommar* and the Spanish Bullfight

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by Danielle Meijer

ABSTRACT

What viewers tend to find most disturbing about Ari Aster’s 2019 film, *Midsommar*, is that the rural Swedish community at the heart of the narrative not only engages in violent ritual human and animal sacrifice, but does so joyfully. There is a parallel here with how many view Spanish bullfighting. How, outsiders ask in both instances, could a culture take pleasure in the spectacle of watching a creature needlessly murdered in a ritualized way? I wish to call into question the word “needlessly” here, thinking through the ways in which in order for some to live, others must *always* die. In most civilizations today, both human and animal death are institutionalized, privatized, and hidden away. As a result, the necessity of this death is also obscured. Arguing from the viewpoint of a vegan animal liberation activist who also happens to be a *torera*, I discuss in this essay how the fiction of *Midsommar* and the reality of bullfighting reveal both the horror of sacrifice and its potential moral necessity.

Keywords: bullfight; matador; Ari Aster; *Midsommar*; sacrifice; sacred; animal rights; *tauromachia*; *corrida*; pagan; civilization; ritual; animal studies; vegan; death; murder; ethics; Bataille; mortality; morality; philosophy

“Pero si muere, produce muchas semillas”: Sacrificio ritual en la película Midsommar y la corrida de toros española

RESUMEN

Lo que los espectadores tienden a encontrar más inquietante sobre la película de Ari Aster 2019, *Midsommar*, es que la comunidad rural sueca en el centro de la narración no solo se dedica a rituales violentos de sacrificios humanos y animales, sino que lo hace con alegría. Hay un paralelismo aquí con cuántos ven la corrida de toros española. ¿Cómo, preguntan los extraños en ambos casos, podría una cultura disfrutar del espectáculo de ver a una criatura innecesariamente asesinada de manera ritualizada? Deseo poner en duda la palabra “innecesariamente” aquí, pensando en las formas en que para que algunos vivan, otros siempre deben morir. En la mayoría de las civilizaciones actuales, tanto la muerte humana como la animal están institucionalizadas, privatizadas y ocultas. Como resultado, la necesidad de esta muerte también se oscurece. Discutiendo desde el punto de vista de una activista vegana de liberación animal que también resulta ser una toquera, discuto en este ensayo cómo la ficción de *Midsommar* y la realidad de las corridas de toros revelan el horror del sacrificio y su potencial necesidad moral.

Palabras clave: corrida de toros; matador; Ari Aster; *Midsommar*; sacrificio; sagrado; derechos animales; tauromaquia; corrida; pagano; civilización; ritual; estudios en animales; vegano; muerte; asesinato; ética; Bataille; mortalidad; moralidad; filosofía

“若是死了，便结出许多子粒来”：电影《仲夏
魔》和西班牙斗牛表演中的仪式献祭

摘要

观众往往从阿里·艾斯特2019年的电影作品《仲夏魔》中发现，最令人不安的是，电影叙事的核心—瑞典乡村社区—不仅参与暴力的、有关人与动物的仪式献祭，还尤为高兴地执行该仪式。与之相对应的是，许多人如何观看西班牙斗牛表演。在这两个情形中，旁观者想知道的是，一种文化如何会从“观看一个生物没有必要地被一种仪式化的方式杀死”中获取快乐？在此我想对“没有必要地”（needlessly）一词提出疑问，并仔细考虑那些为了让一部分存活，而另一部分则必须“总是”死亡的方式。在当前大多数文明世界中，人与动物的死亡都被制度化、私有化和被掩盖。结果则是，这种死亡的必需性也变得模糊。作为一名严格的素食主义者、动物解放活动人士，同时恰好是一名斗牛士，我在本文中提出主张，探讨了《仲夏魔》这一虚构故事和现实中的斗牛表演如何揭示了献祭的恐怖性及其潜在的道德必需性。

关键词：斗牛表演，斗牛士，阿里·艾斯特，《仲夏魔》，献祭，神圣，动物权利，tauromachia，斗牛，异教徒，文明，仪式，动物研究，严格的素食主义者，死亡，谋杀，伦理，巴塔耶，死亡，道德，哲学

Dani, a young American woman whose sister recently committed suicide (gassing and killing her parents at the same time that she kills herself), goes off to Sweden with her not-so-supportive boyfriend and his friends to visit a small community, the Harga, who live a commune-esque, non-technological lifestyle. Once there, things seem idyllic until the Midsommar festival progresses, revealing that Midsommar is a kind of pagan fertility sacrificial celebration. Over the course of the festival, nearly all of the outsiders—but also several of the community members—are killed. Elderly people willingly jump off a cliff so as not to burden the younger ones with caring for them. Dani's boyfriend is sewn up inside a bear skin, put in a specially made wooden lodge with several of the locals, and burned alive. Sacrifices are made. From the perspective of the Harga, the murders are not done out of malice, but rather are viewed as essential for the proper running of their society. Dani, in fact, is chosen to be the "May Queen," a special honor that she initially resists but eventually accepts, finally marking her integration into the community.

In Spain, a bull enjoys an idyllic life on a ranch with his herd, free from anything but minimal human interference. When he turns five years old, he is taken in a truck to a plaza where he is released into an arena filled with spectators. Here, he must face several men who, over the course of twenty minutes, bait, injure, and finally kill him. He may injure or even kill one of the men, in which case the event does not stop but merely pauses so that the bull may be killed by one of the other bullfighters. That same afternoon, five other bulls suffer the same fate. The murders are not done out of malice, but rather are seen by the participants as a way to honor the bull's sacrifice publicly—a sacrifice that exists in order to consecrate the human community.

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The first story is a summary of the film *Midsommar*, which depicts a fictional community and fictional sacrifices. The second story is an account of a typical bullfight (or *corrida*), practiced in Spain and several Latin American countries today—a story of real communities and real sacrifices.

For all life on Earth, existence is predicated on death. Even vegetarians must kill plants; and even plants (that “eat” sunlight) must root in soil—the product of dead, decaying organic matter. In the United States, we kill other beings not merely to survive, but also to enjoy a certain kind of lifestyle. In virtually every contemporary civilization, these deaths are not true sacrifices but *assassinations*, done without ritual, respect, or sustainability. It is almost assuredly the case that anyone reading this essay is living a life that is fundamentally destructive to people, animals, plants, and the Earth itself. Actively and passively, we count on others to die so that we might live. How, then, do we calculate the worth of our own lives against the lives of others? What is the difference between a murder and a sacrifice? Why do we no longer commit ritual acts of sacrifice and what happens to us, morally, in their absence?

Human and animal sacrifice seems barbaric, a thing of the past, no longer relevant or good in contemporary society. But sacrifice is at the heart of all major religions and some of our most important stories. Before King Solomon’s temple was destroyed, it was Jewish tradition to sacrifice lambs for Passover. The temple priests would wash the altar with the lambs’ blood and burn the internal organs in special vessels as an offering to God so that He would spare human first-born sons. Male circumcision is an echo of Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac if it is what God demands. Jesus became Christ through his sacrifice—the ultimate sacrifice as the Son of God—and it is his blood that washes

away our sins. Gautama Buddha, in one of his incarnations, slit his own throat, sacrificing himself to save a starving tiger mother so she would be roused, eat him, and produce milk for her babies. The Corn Mother in several Indigenous cultures in North America is said to have willingly asked to have her body be repeatedly dragged across the land in order to make the soil fertile, with bits of her flesh becoming the first “seeds” of corn. These gruesome stories show us how sacrifice is always *someone else* dying for us—for our sins (as in a scapegoat), to satisfy the bloodlust of a god, or simply for food. Life, it seems, demands and even desires the end of another life to sustain itself.

While many of these myths surround us still today in one form or another, meaningful rituals that support the ideals they uphold do not (at least in civilizations). The thing that is most difficult for me to accept, both about my society and my own behavior (even as a vegan animal liberationist—a label that is at times more aspirational than fully-realized) is that there is no sacrificial ritual undertaken for the many deaths that support my life. All of “the dirty work” is done out of my sight and out of public view in general. It is done to people, animals, and plants I have never met. I am alienated from it all and I do not fully *choose* these deaths. I am not aware of the event of the deaths in most cases, and as such, I can only imagine how many others die for me and in what ways they die. This lack of sacrificial rituals leaves me—leaves all of us—morally and culturally impoverished.

To sacrifice someone (and for the purposes of this essay, “someone” refers to a human, animal, or plant, as I consider all living beings to possess moral personhood) is literally “to make sacred” that being through the act of killing. This “making-sacred” involves not merely a word of thanks, as many of

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us give in prayer before a meal, or even following the halal and kosher rules for animal slaughter, but investing days, weeks, months, and even years in preparation, education, and learning the technique of various rituals. A true sacrifice is typically a public event, with the participation of the entire community. This publicity is crucial. Death is not to be meted out in secret.

In tribal societies and communities such as *Midsommar*'s fictional Harga, each death is accounted for, recognized, and valued. Even plants are given respect and care (as is evidenced by the anger felt by one of the Harga when he sees an outsider relieve himself against what appears to be simply a dead tree: “He is pissing on my ancestors,” protests the man). Death is also carefully chosen. The *Midsommar* festival occurs only once every ninety years, suggesting that the Harga understand the consequences of such a sacrifice and thus the need to enact the ritual only rarely.

The same is true—or nearly so—for the bullfight. I want to be clear from the outset that I do not believe bullfighting is morally equivalent to, say, the animal hunting rituals of the Woods Cree First Nation. Bullfighting is commercialized, commodified, sexist, and done far too often (how can the six bulls that are typically killed in each *corrida*, one right after the other, truly be recognized and valued?). Its origins are elitist, having been created as an excuse for the wealthy to show off their expensive horses and horsemanship (as bullfighting was originally done on horseback). Bullfighting also does not take place within a true *community*, at least in the case of the professional fiestas. Furthermore, the intentions of the spectators are not typically grounded in the idea of sacred ritual: uninformed tourists and hardcore *aficionados* mix with the bored rich who still attend the *corrida* as a sign

of social status. Bullfighting's contemporary failings are the fault of the context in which it exists. No civilization has ever achieved meaningful sacrifice because *civilization* itself is anti-sacred. Given all of this, however, it is astounding that the bullfight exists at all today. It is as close as any modern nation-state comes to a pagan ritual sacrifice.

The central character in the bullfight, the *matador*, is called by a name that identifies him as exactly what he is. He is a killer: *matar* means "to kill." For those who love bullfighting, there is a clear difference between a killer and an assassin. When a matador cannot kill a bull quickly and cleanly, he is hissed at, booed, jeered, and even pelted with beer and food (which is dangerous, as it can distract the bull or the man and can result in the latter's injury or even death). The crowd shouts at him "*asesino!*" ("murderer" or "assassin"), expressing the general feeling that they and the bull have been cheated out of a proper *corrida*. When the noble killer becomes a petty murderer, matadors often cry in shame for failing to do their job well. The spectators in the plazas expect the bull to die, but in a strictly prescribed way, one that is honorable and just in their eyes.

In *Midsommar*, great care is taken to plan the ritualized sacrifices and to ensure that all goes smoothly. While the Harga could kill the outsiders with little fanfare, part of the reason that they choose the vastly more complicated method of ritual sacrifice is to ensure that those who are slaughtered are given a meaningful death. Arguably, the moral key to ritual sacrifice in tribal societies and the fictional Harga is that it is only the *death* of those sacrificed that produces relatively brief suffering. The community strives to make the actual lives of the animals, plants, and humans in their midst deeply good and relatively free from pain and suffering.

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The Harga, it seems, do not promote or tolerate structures that lead to bad lives for their community members or even those beyond their community’s boundaries. There is no attempt to expand the Harga way of life beyond its borders or to interfere with other cultures and their ways of life. Whatever we may think about how they kill, the Harga are not interested in subjugating entire groups of people, be they human, animal, or plant. And this points to a crucial moral: while it is necessary to kill in order to live, it is *not* necessary to create lives full of suffering.

Living in Chicago, I walk past countless people begging on the streets. They are a kind of living sacrifice offered up in the name of our flourishing in “first-world” culture—the result of our worship of capitalism, hyper-consumption, and convenience. We are disingenuous about such sacrifices, failing to take full ownership of the creation of poverty. Those who are homeless are not homeless because they do not have money; they are homeless because no one loves them. The Harga have no poverty within their community, nor do they colonize and cripple other societies in order to support their own way of life. Similarly, the bulls of the *corrida* live an incredibly good life on the ranch before they die: the Spanish *ganaderia* system ensures this. Such bulls avoid the fate of continual suffering and deprivation forced on other animals by virtually all other civilized industries that slaughter these beings for human use. The suicide-death of Dani’s sister in *Midsommar* is not sacred—and cannot be good—because she lived a sad life up until that point. Committing the tragic murder of her parents before taking her own life, Dani’s life ends as it was lived, and more souls are offered up as unwilling sacrifices in the name of perpetuating the sorry state of modern civilized life. Compare this to the ritual suicide of the two elderly Harga who jump from a cliff while surrounded by friends and

family. Though violent and shocking for the viewer, this is a different kind of death—one that is perhaps worth “celebrating”—precisely due to the quality of life the Harga couple had prior to their end.

If at least some killing is necessary for life, whom should we kill? No particular animal or plant has to die for me, but *someone* must die, and I (or others on my behalf) have to make that impossible choice. This is an existential crisis worth pondering for a moment. New life needs space in the environment; new animal and human life will need to eat some of the life that already exists. Someone must step aside, and someone must be killed for food. No *particular* being must die in either case, and this open-endedness to the killing adds an almost unbearable moral weight to the choice we face when deciding who will be sacrificed in order to promote our own existence. In contemporary American civilization, we do not choose to kill a human or a domestic animal, so we go “outside” our community to do the killing. We outsource the sacrifice (and thus never see it *as* a sacrifice). Just as I would never allow someone close to me to work in the conflict-zone mines of the Congo excavating raw materials for computers, but passively accept that other human beings are doing so as I type this essay on my laptop, I also do not eat meat and yet do countless other things that end up destroying the very animals for whom I claim to have compassion. It is a tough reality to face. A nameless, but individual carrot is a living being that dies for my salad. That’s bad enough. But on top of this, the food industry (i.e., farming, transportation, etc.) that makes the carrot’s life and death possible for me also ends up killing a lot of collateral animals along the way. It is death all of the way down and in every direction. Choices about life and death are being made, but the choices are, in essence, far away from me and so I can ignore them, wash my hands of

them, and never feel I have to sacrifice anything—anyone—close to me.

What makes the community in *Midsommar* interesting is that they do not merely take the lives of outsiders, but they take lives from themselves as well. They do not place the burden solely on the “other,” as we do, and this is worth emphasizing, as it is extremely rare for a culture to acknowledge the need for, and then enact, sacrifice in their midst. Bullfighting gestures to this value. The matadors risk their lives again and again by participating in the *corrida*. While the death of a professional matador is now rare,¹ there is the potential *double* sacrifice—the bull’s death for the human community, but also the death of the matador. The matador faces death for us so we don’t have to die. The bull faces death for us because someone must die.

One of the most striking parts of the matador’s costume is the pink stockings he wears with an *espiga* (“spike”) on them sewn in black. The stitching depicts a shaft of wheat. Christians will recognize the reference to John 12:24: “Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.” Like Christ on the cross, the Corn Mother dragged herself over the rocky ground, and the wheat is sown in the field; it is by means of both the bull’s and the matador’s potential falling and death that life is spread across the community like so many seeds. The *corrida* is thus as close as we get these days not only to true animal ritual sacrifice, but also human ritual sacrifice—and this is a good thing. The bullfight demonstrates what is truly at stake in taking the life

1 Although matadors do receive thirty to forty serious injuries over an average career, in those moments, living seems anything but assured.

of an animal, which is, after all, *taking a life*, killing a *person* who does not want to die. No particular being must die for us, but if, today, a bull is chosen to die for us, then the least we can do is create true risk for a human to die as well in the process. Part of respecting life-taking, and thus life-sustaining, is to refrain from making oneself invulnerable to being sacrificed or injured. In civilization, we do our best to inoculate ourselves from reciprocal death. We eliminate any local animal that might want to eat or otherwise harm us; we cut down any plant that might be poisonous; we kill spiders just because they might bite us even if that bite could not possibly lead to anything more serious than an itch (really, all an insect has to do is look at us funny or threaten mildly to annoy or distract us, and we will squish them without thought). We ask so much of the Earth and our plant and animal sisters and brothers, but we offer no sacrifice of our own to them in return.

In sacrificial rituals, love is almost always present, albeit in a complex way. In *Midsommar*, the outsiders are treated as special guests, appreciated and cared for by the Harga. While it could be argued that this care is a ruse designed to fool unsuspecting victims, the film as a whole fails to support such an interpretation. It would be difficult for a community with the kinds of values the Harga espouse to respect themselves while so baldly being evil. If the argument is simply that murder is wrong and that makes the Harga evil, then we are all guilty—and you and I exponentially more so than the Harga, because our way of life demands that other humans and non-humans live truly bad lives full of suffering with not even an attempt to make their lives or deaths acknowledged and recognized, let alone sacred.

Like the Harga, the *corrida* and its fans are also often charged with being barbaric, uncivilized, evil. Outsiders see the event as being solely about bloodlust, but the participants

and spectators of bullfighting claim no interest in seeing an animal suffer. The confusion on the part of those who have no love for bullfighting makes sense, of course. It is a conundrum even for me: how can I watch an animal being hurt and killed in real time, right in front of me, and do nothing about it? How can I not eat meat but watch a bull die and be turned into meat minutes later?² No doubt this is and should be unsettling to all of us, but we come back once again to the simple fact that there is no way around allowing at least some killings, in some contexts, to occur if any of us want to live. The *corrida* is not about avoiding the messiness of killing and the complex emotions that arise from it. Rather, it seeks to make the killing public because making it public signals the importance of such an act: “Look, an animal is dying for us; this is important; pay attention!” Not wanting to participate or even watch the death of those we kill in society isn’t noble: it’s cowardly and disrespectful to the person dying. Why is it wrong to publicly acknowledge—and even celebrate—the death of an animal we use for our own survival? If this is truly our feeling (that all of this is immoral and wrong), then why do we continue to use animals the way that we do in general? Shouldn’t we be calling for a ban on our very way of civilized life in general and not simply the *corrida*? The *corrida*’s failure to be truly moral does not lie in its supposed barbarism, but rather in the fact that it is not “barbaric” (that is, *uncivilized*) enough.

We fear acknowledging the harm we do to others, especially when that acknowledgement is public. This is inevitable because we no longer have a community in which we might regularly witness life and death publicly. We have privatized nearly all forms of caring and execution in contemporary

2 Bullfighting plazas are zoned slaughterhouses, and bulls are immediately dismembered after being dragged out of the arena.

civilized life, and as a result, we have little understanding of communal ways of living and dying. Nursing homes have replaced multigenerational home life. Hospitals, insurance companies, and doctors have replaced the shaman and the doula. Our food is produced and harvested from places far away from us—even the current bourgeois craze for “eating local” often means eating food produced as much as 300 miles away, and the farmers are still anonymous. Cops “solve” crimes, courts pass judgment, and money has replaced the non-economic way of simply doing what needs to be done to take care of ourselves and our community members without any expectation of payment. This has happened because civilizations are simply too big to run without institutions. None of us can know, and thus care, about the more than 300 million people in the United States, let alone the billions more with whom we are economically connected worldwide. The nuclear, patriarchal, *privatized* family has replaced community and we have been left to fend for ourselves. We are not doing a very good job of it.

This is perhaps why we are so suspicious of small communities. The seemingly perfect, but actually dastardly, small town/small community is a common trope in horror films. The irony is that our status quo is far more violent than any commune. We are suspicious of friendly communities because they seem to welcome us without asking for anything in return. This strikes us as impossible and we therefore assume there must be some nefarious motive behind such generosity. But anyone who has had the privilege of visiting parts of the world where small-scale communities still exist will tell you that these communities are not cults or havens for crazed pagan psychos. It is sad that we have come to this way of perceiving authentic communities. Sure, the Harga might

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actually kill you if you happen to visit during Midsommar festival, but no community in the real world will.

In addition to finding the publicity of sacrifice repugnant, we civilized people also find anyone who perceives beauty in that sacrifice to be pathological. In *Midsommar*, Dani is given a dress made entirely of flowers to wear as the May Queen, and as things start to fall apart there is a stark contrast between the beauty of her gown and the horror of the killings taking place in the surrounding environment. The Harga are celebrating as they kill and this is creepy to us, just as most people find the *corrida* creepy because the audience cheers and claps while the bull suffers and dies.

The first true test of the audience in Aster’s film occurs when the two Harga who have reached the age of “retirement” willingly jump off a cliff. Like many in the audience, the outsiders who have been invited to witness the event are horrified. We, and they, are asked to find beauty in a tradition that can only appear to us as creepy and horrific. But the tension in the film regarding the ritual suicide of the elderly couple is between the very real wisdom of understanding that dying means giving room for other beings to live and thrive, and the equally true fact that death is *always* violent. The body—even if not so violently destroyed by jumping off a cliff and then smashed into pieces by your fellow community members to finish you off—will rot and decay. How can we ever accept and see death itself as good (or beautiful)? How could the people in the plazas sit and watch a matador get seriously injured, or even die, and not stop the event? Instead, they wait for the next matador to come out to kill the next bull and continue their celebration.

Reveling in death and horror seems utterly alien to us, but we do, in fact, celebrate horror all of the time by enjoying the

results of death. We drool over the Thanksgiving turkey, exclaim over a friend's new pair of leather boots, and delight in our sweet new ride even though all of these goods demand enormous sacrifice on the part of animals, the ecosystem, and other humans. Turkeys generally live miserable lives before being slaughtered; wearing another being's skin over our own skin is Hannibal Lecter-level crazy; and cars are responsible for 1.5 million deer deaths in the United States alone, according to the National Association of Insurance Commissioners, a number that far exceeds the total number of bulls killed in the world each year from bullfighting. These are far worse kinds of celebration, in fact, because they ignore the suffering and death of those involved at the time they are killed, focusing our attention solely on how that suffering benefits us after the fact.

Surely, solemnity is important to any sacrificial ritual. The *corrida* is often said by participants to be "a tragedy in three acts." As a flamenco dancer, a dance that is as much about pain as it is about joy, I have often been told that it is important to understand that "the Spanish don't avoid death; they invite death to the party." It is not the suffering during the *corrida* that the people cheer; it is the beauty of a ritual accomplished well, an ethic realized. It is admitting to ourselves what we want and need from others.

The same may be true for the Harga. The women of the community commiserate with Dani when she realizes that her boyfriend has cheated on her as part of a fertility ritual (not, perhaps, entirely his fault). The other women howl in agony with Dani. The Harga also cry out as the people in the lodge (both community members and outsiders) are burning to death. It is clear that the *intention* of the Harga is to be sympathetic even though the scene is unsettling (and even though

the Harga are ultimately wrong to do what they do to these people).

Cultural traditions are always inherently weird, because reality in its fullness is beyond *logos*. When logic fails to do justice in describing life, ritual takes over. There are limits to what we can rationally understand about the world, and death in particular is especially resistant to reason. Traditions and rituals are produced by a society to express its members' feelings and beliefs; as rituals deal with the inherently illogical (and often paradoxical) nature of existence, the rituals themselves are necessarily illogical.

Bullfighting is one of the best examples of ritual-as-nonsensical. Why dress up in a \$10,000 suit of silk and sequins that offers no protection and then fight one of the most dangerous mammals on the planet with pink and red capes in front of an exacting and sometimes hostile audience, tasked with killing the animal with a sword, but only after twenty minutes and only by means of one incredibly specific and difficult method? Why the spectacular commitment of *time*—so much time on the part of so many people? Why spend the time it takes to raise the *toro bravo*, the specific breed of bull used solely for bullfighting, the time it takes to train to become a matador, a job that is so difficult only a handful of people in the world can manage to do it well—and even then still fail miserably much of the time—the time it takes to organize and promote *corridas*, the time it takes to sew a “suit of lights” costume entirely by hand only for it to be torn and soiled almost immediately, the time it takes to recover from the countless injuries every professional bullfighter will suffer in his (or her) career, and the time it takes simply to watch so many bulls die?

Our rituals do not matter to those we sacrifice unwillingly—in fact, the ritual might appear to be menacing or evil. Native Mexican communities cut off the hooves of the deer they kill, ritually wash those hooves with herbed and scented oils and water, say prayers over them, and return the hooves to the deer’s family (in the location where the deer was killed). No deer appreciates or understands this act—and if they could, it would likely seem horrifically creepy. Yet without this ritual, or one like it, the death of the deer would be diminished. The outsiders in *Midsommar* and the *toro bravos* in bullfighting likewise do not care about or wish to support the rituals in which they are unwilling participants. The ritual is not for them and does not benefit them. The worth of the ritual, then, is for those who enact it. In this case, these rituals serve as reminders of the immense loss we create simply by living. We could easily forgo ritualizing death and instead use that time to eat, shop, watch porn, and play Grand Theft Auto, but do we not lose something far more than time by doing so? Do we not diminish ourselves in the process of “efficiency”?

Time is life. The only way that we can even begin to acknowledge the sacrifice of other beings that makes our own lives possible is to give up some of our life through ritual.

One might be tempted to think that Bataille’s notion of “the accursed share” is playing a role in this conception of ritual, but this is not the case. For Bataille, civilizations commit acts of destruction/overconsumption due to the sheer abundance of life available. In some sense, civilizations squander life for want of nothing better to do once they have mastered the art of mere survival and are left with “free” time. This frittering away of time via human sacrifice (as in the case of the Mayans), elaborate non-procreative sex acts, art, war, and spectacles such as the Roman gladiator fights are truly a

waste, with no end other than themselves. But Bataille economizes the concept of cultural excess, even as he asserts that the accursed share contradicts the fundamental principles of economics itself (in that there is no exchange value to these non-survival acts). And while Bataille is saying that the activities we produce because of the accursed share are illogical, it is not the same kind of illogic of the ritual we are investigating here. Sacrificial ritual is not something “extra” in life; it is *essential* to a good life and ultimately to our survival. The lack of such ritual is part of what is causing global warming and the third largest extinction event in the history of the planet. To sacrifice our time in order to recognize, honor, and value the death of those we kill is not a “waste” of time. It is not fundamentally an economic behavior, but simply an ethical one. Time is not money but is rather *life itself*, and giving up moments of our lives to perform rituals cannot be reduced to the language of economics. Unlike Bataille’s examples of illogical behaviors, sacrificial rituals are not undertaken in contemporary societies. The Harga human sacrifice does not fit Bataille’s theory, as the Midsommar festival happens only once every ninety years, too infrequently and with too few people sacrificed to be a true squandering. The bullfight, also, is not the fulfillment of some sci-fi fear fantasy about broadcasting real death on a TV show to entertain a jaded audience. There is a crucial difference between sacrifice and spectacle, and between economic expenditure and communal ritual. While bullfighting may be the bastard child of tribal sacrifice, its meaning still escapes Bataille’s theoretical grasp.

One popular interpretation of the Harga (and their creepiness) is that they are akin to Nazis—believing themselves to be a superior race who has the right to kill outsiders for their own purposes. If this is a reasonable interpretation—and I do not believe it is—how is this any different from our own

way of carving up the world? Why are we not continually creeping ourselves out? We claim that human life is superior to all other forms of life, and therefore the death of an animal or plant for food, shelter, or clothing is *the way it's supposed to be*. And our treatment of those who live in poverty as a result, and in support, of capitalism reveals our low estimation of the worth of these people's lives. Any reason to hold humans in higher regard morally over all other beings (or some humans over others) is arbitrary. There is no way to make a bull or a tree believe that their lives and deaths should be in service to our flourishing. To an earthworm, her life is important and she strives every day to do the work necessary to continue living. All life wants to live. For civilization to exist, countless beings must be subjugated or killed, and yet we generally do not think of ourselves as bad people. Who among us believes himself or herself to be the villain of the story? Who are the villains in *Midsommar*? From whose perspective? Are the outsiders truly better people?

Part of the task of ethics is figuring out when a ritual is doing good work. How do we know whether or not a ritual is leading us to a better life or simply covering up evil? The willing community members in *Midsommar* who die in the lodge fire seem, during the preparations, happy to do so. They are happy, in fact, right up to the moment they start to burn, at which point they begin to scream. And of course they scream. Dying by fire is not much fun. But does their screaming indicate that they have changed their minds and the Harga have been evil all along? Is pain always synonymous with suffering? Is it better to kill a cow in a slaughterhouse using a bolt gun to destroy the brain, a death that typically lasts mere seconds, than to subject a bull to a 20-minute long "fight" where he is placed in an arena without knowing what is happening to him, without anyone there who is on his side, where he

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is pierced with barbs then struck with a sword that usually enters the lungs, causing him to choke on his own blood before his spinal cord is severed? Would tribal peoples be better people if they used guns to shoot their animals instead of bows and arrows? Would they still be the kind of people they need to be to maintain their identities if they did? It is tempting to argue that providing a quick and painless death makes one a good killer. But it is morally insufficient to try to answer these questions by examining the deaths alone. We must take into consideration the quality of the creatures' lives that came before. A good death cannot exist without a good life before it, and an antiseptic death, though quicker, may not actually “contain” less suffering.

Of course, this should not be made into a false dichotomy. We do not have to choose between the bullfight and the slaughterhouse (or cliff jumping and nursing homes) because better options exist. Yet, those better options would require a complete change of life as we know it in order to be realized. While I would wish to argue in favor of the revolution that would make that complete change possible, I also must admit that *for now* the bullfight is the best we can do to animals we kill in any civilization. If the *corrida* disturbs and sickens us, if it still feels not quite honorable or moral, then we need to understand that the context of Spanish culture cannot support anything more moral today. The bullfight is a red herring in the politics of animal killing.

No ritual can be sacred without it existing in a greater context of a sacred life. The bullfight ultimately fails because Spanish society, just like American society, fails. Civilization inevitably fails to be sacred in every way. Today in Spain, only some bulls are respected and given good lives, while hundreds of millions of other animals die each year in slaughterhouses.

The bullfight should cause the Spanish to reflect on their treatment of other animals (including other breeds of cows), but it fails to do so. The *aficionados* afford no other animal the same respect as the *toro bravo*. Where is the pig's *corrida*, or the lamb's, or the fish's? This is in stark contrast to the *Harga*, where everyday life does seem rather ideal, apart from a once-every-90-years ritualized murder. In *Midsommar*, the rituals are depicted as part of a way of being that seems to be ecologically sustainable and beneficial to all members of the society.

As a communitarian anarchist, I want very much for everyone to thrive and for no one to suffer. I actually think this is possible for humans, but I know it is not possible if we include every living being in our ethics—as we should. This fact is inherently horrifying. There is no way around it in terms of basic survival, but we can at least eliminate certain *kinds* of suffering (e.g., poverty, bigotry, rape, abuse), minimize other kinds, and respect those whom we ultimately choose to die for us. *Midsommar* is thus ultimately not about an imaginary community that rests on immoral principles. It is a film about a community that makes a serious attempt to deal with the fundamental immorality of the inherent structure of life. They could be better—just as the bullfight could be better—but if we condemn the community as any worse than our way of life, we fail to grasp the moral of these stories.

Ultimately, in the *corrida* there is sometimes hope. When a bull proves “brave” enough and has given a good performance, he is occasionally pardoned. The matador's hand touches the place on the bull's neck where the sword would have gone in, signaling the bull's release. The animal's wounds are treated and he becomes a *semental*, a stud, living the rest of his life back on the ranch. This *indulto* (“pardon”) is considered the highest honor in bullfighting—a time when

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everyone wins. Similarly, in *Midsommar*, the May Queen is given the power to pardon one of those who are marked for death. What both of these moments suggest is that we do not really want *anyone* to die. We wish for a world in which sacrifices are not necessary, where everyone can flourish. But at least in bullfighting, the *indulto* happens only rarely.

Our rituals (or lack thereof) reveal whom we value and what we expect out of life. The *corrida* as a ritual expects bulls to die when none of them have to. Eating meat is not necessary to survive. What if every bull was pardoned, every time, in every instance? A deathless *corrida* would show us that we can make a deathless choice in our lives at least some of the time for some people, and we should strive to make that choice whenever possible. Perhaps it is thus that we can accept that killing is inevitable without accepting that killing more than we have to, or killing for immoral gains, is unavoidable.

The poet Federico García Lorca is not known as an animal liberationist. He ate a traditional Spanish diet that included plenty of meat and was an ardent fan of the bullfight. But his poem “Office and Destruction in New York” demonstrates his ability to discern a good death from a bad one. For Lorca, all deaths in the New York City he once visited were bad deaths. “I spit in your faces,” Lorca says to those of us who “destroy the forest’s plans,” condemn millions of animals to the slaughterhouse, and get the Hudson “drunk on oil” (Federico García Lorca, *Poet in New York* (NY: Grove Press, 2008): 122-125). Lorca, even immersed in civilization, could discern the difference between killing and assassination, between the death demanded by life and the overabundance of suffering demanded by our culture, and this must be the primary moral task for us all. Celebrating the demise of our

entire way of life today might seem like a tall order. But if we allow our civilization to die and a culture of ritual sacrifice to take its place, we might be able to move forward morally and with hope—our new way of life (and death) producing many seeds.

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Archetypal Development in One Body, One Image: Female Theatricality in Tennessee Williams's "A Streetcar Named Desire"

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by Raluca Comanelea

ABSTRACT

This literary scholarship aims to trace the archetypal development of the female lead character in "A Streetcar Named Desire" by Tennessee Williams: Blanche DuBois. This fascinating character assumes almost as many archetypal female roles throughout the play as the roles an actress might accept over the course of a long career. Blanche's most important quality—her ability to seduce audiences into perceiving the multifaceted layers of her feminine character all at once—marks her entry into Williams's theatre of excess. Her theatricality springs precisely from her fascinating ability to reconstruct her persona in the course of the play, enacting the many possibilities contained in the word *woman*. Excess becomes Blanche's strategy for recreating possibilities and liberating conflicts. Blanche pours herself out with each page of the play so that every aspect of her identity is presented to the audience. Through the lens of desire and death, the many archetypal roles Blanche embodies are analyzed one by one, so that her womanly essence is revealed in all its intensity and excess. In a manner, Williams's own aesthetic sensibilities as a playwright are heavily invested in the multi-faceted personas that Blanche DuBois brings to the stage.

Keywords: archetypes, death, desire, excess, female, role, theatricality, woman

Desarrollo arquetípico en un cuerpo, una imagen: la teatralidad femenina en “Un tranvía llamado deseo” de Tennessee Williams

RESUMEN

Esta investigación literaria actual tiene como objetivo rastrear el desarrollo arquetípico del personaje principal femenino en “Un tranvía llamado deseo” por Tennessee Williams: Blanche DuBois. Este personaje fascinante asume casi tantos roles femeninos arquetípicos a lo largo de la obra como los roles que una actriz podría aceptar en el transcurso de una larga carrera. La cualidad más importante de Blanche, su capacidad de seducir al público para que perciba las capas multifacéticas de su personaje femenino al mismo tiempo, marca su entrada en el teatro del exceso de Williams. Su teatralidad surge precisamente de su fascinante habilidad para reconstruir su personalidad en el curso de la obra, representando las muchas posibilidades contenidas en la palabra Mujer. El exceso se convierte en la estrategia de Blanche para recrear posibilidades y liberar conflictos. Blanche se vierte con cada página de la obra para que cada aspecto de su identidad se presente al público. A través de la lente del deseo y la muerte, los muchos roles arquetípicos que Blanche encarna se analizan uno por uno, de modo que su esencia femenina se revela en toda su intensidad y exceso. En cierto modo, la propia sensibilidad estética de Williams como dramaturgo está fuertemente invertida en las personas multifacéticas que Blanche DuBois trae al escenario.

Palabras clave: arquetipos, muerte, deseo, exceso, femenino, rol, teatralidad, mujer

一副身躯、一张图像中的原型发展：田纳西·威廉斯作品《欲望号街车》中的女性戏剧性

摘要

本篇文学研究旨在追踪田纳西·威廉斯作品《欲望号街车》中女主角布兰奇·杜波依斯的原型发展。这个令人着迷的角色在整部戏中所担任的原型女性角色几乎与一名女演员在一段长期事业中所可能接受的角色一样多。布兰奇最重要的特征，即色诱观众进入一次性感知其多面化的女性角色的能力，让她成功融入威廉斯塑造的夸张戏剧（*theatre of excess*）。她的戏剧性准确地从她令人着迷的能力开始迸发，以重新建构她在戏中的形象，同时扮演女性这一词所包含的诸多可能性。“夸张”（*excess*）成为了布兰奇用于重新创建可能性和释放冲突的策略。布兰奇在剧本的每一页都尽情发挥，以确保她的每个身份都展现给观众。透过欲望和死亡的视角，布兰奇体现的许多原型角色都被逐个分析，以期从所有层面和夸大的方式揭示其女性精髓。在某个意义上，作为一名剧作家，威廉斯个人的审美敏感性在很大程度上体现在布兰奇·杜波依斯所带给舞台的那个多面形象之中。

关键词：原型，死亡，欲望，夸张，女性，角色，戏剧性，女性

The story of Blanche DuBois finds its most powerful connection to the opening lines of "A Streetcar Named Desire," when, arriving in The French Quarter "daintily dressed" in a manner "incongruous with the setting" (Williams 471), Blanche affirms, with shocked disbelief at her surroundings, "they told me to take a street-car named De-

sire, and then transfer to one called Cemeteries and ride six-blocks and get off at—Elysian Fields!” (Williams 471). This statement secures Blanche’s place in Tennessee Williams’s gallery of complex and powerful female characters, because it encompasses everything that she stands for in the course of the play: her past, defined by death; her present, mapped out by desire; and her future, bringing her to the Elysian Fields. During that sojourn from life to death to something beyond, Blanche DuBois’s archetypal development almost mirrors the complex ability of the theater to display elaborate personas and roles as necessary, with actors and actresses picking up roles that seem complete and fully realized to their audience.

Tennessee Williams infused Blanche with an important quality: the ability to seduce her audience into perceiving the multifaceted layers of her feminine character all at once. Bearing a slip of paper in her hand and uttering those famous first lines “with faintly hysterical humor” (Williams 471), Blanche marks her appearance in Tennessee William’s theatre of excess. This trait becomes Williams’s strategy for liberating possibilities, releasing conflicts, and disengaging powers (Saddik 151). Blanche literally pours herself out with each page of the play so that every aspect of her identity is presented to the audience. She reimagines all possibilities and releases all conflicts among characters. The ambiguity of the adjective “hysterical,” which characterizes Blanche’s initial shock at her surroundings, foreshadows the many roles that she assumes in changing her persona throughout the course of the play.

Perhaps the most intense interpretation of Blanche’s character and style comes from movie director Elia Kazan. In his *Notebook* on the film “A Streetcar Named Desire,” he refers to this impressive female character as “a heightened version, an

artistic intensification of all women" (qtd. in Donahue 32). As representative of her category, Woman, she embodies all that is and can be contained by the word itself. She embodies the archetypes of the Little Girl, the Older Sister, the Martyred Daughter, the Mother, the Prostitute, the Married Woman, the Feminine Other, the Femme Fatale, the Grotesque Female, and the Female Artist.

With each adopted role, Blanche embodies excess and lives it successfully, marching to her own tune. But to live excessively means also to live dangerously. The perceived failures lived by this remarkable female character empower her to bounce back in the game of life. By the end of the play, Blanche holds the power. She is a winner in this game, as she steps into the unknown, smiling, hand-in-hand with the doctor, walking on without turning to face the current reality any longer, ready for journey, a reassuring sky above her, embracing a wide-open future. With Blanche, the world of drama, theatre, and film holds a brilliant exemplar of female power.

In full celebration of her excesses and immediate lived pleasures, Blanche heightens the decadent spirit that drinks up her lifestyle. In her introduction to *Radical Decadence: Excess in Contemporary Feminist Textiles and Craft*, "Decadence, Feminism, and Excess," Julia Skelly defines radical decadence as a deliberate form of female excess and a concern with immediate pleasure, whether in terms of consumption or spectatorship (4). For Blanche, excess is a deliberate aesthetic chosen to heighten her artistic and imaginative senses and her displeasure with certain aspects of her lived reality. "Yes, yes, magic!" she fully affirms. "I try to give that to people. I misrepresent things to them. I don't tell the truth, I tell what ought to be truth. And if that is sinful, then let me be damned for it!—Don't turn the light on!" (Williams 545). Mitch is left dumbstruck by her intense remark.

Ultimately, as Skelly points out in her concluding chapter, excess and decadence can be liberating, because both are inherently founded on a rejection of ideal femininity (107). Blanche acknowledges her risks in choosing this life. She refers to herself in her bath songs as a “captive maid” (Williams 483) and she recognizes in Stanley her “executioner” (Williams 526). But her refusal to be contained and silenced by her community means more to Blanche than her fear of transgression of any gendered norms of behavior. Consequences matter less to this female character. It is the immediate and intense passion of the moment that propels her excessive engine to recreate herself in different roles, absorb the beauty of art and poetry, and tune into the power of her own feminine magic. Her male spectators—Stan, Mitch, Allan, the young soldiers, Mr. Graves, the town mayor of Laurel—cannot keep up with such sensuous feminine engagement.

Perceived feminine excesses breed fear in Blanche’s community, as her persona liberates all possibilities. Blanche clearly becomes a disruptor of the community’s established order. Thus, Stanley wants to destroy Blanche. Mitch cannot handle her intense image alongside that of his mother. Allan commits suicide at the intensity of her remark on his sexual conduit. After getting their own hopes up, the young soldiers Blanche was dating quit her one by one because of the rumors. Mr. Graves, the school superintendent where Blanche teaches English, kicks her out before the term ends because of her sexual reputation. Ultimately, a “town ordinance [was] passed against her” (Williams 532), as she was told by the mayor of Laurel to get out of town. Her excessive outbursts in terms of consumption and spectatorship fight against any social control attempted at an ideal of feminine behavior.

In his *Memoirs*, Tennessee Williams speaks of Blanche as an “imperishable creature of the stage,” her truths echoing in the

hearts of "so many known and unknown ladies" (Williams 231). Blanche's part in theatre and movie opens all doors to experimentation. Through all the lies and pretense, the actress playing Blanche must make her spectators perceive her truth (Donahue 36). Faced with her own reality by Mitch, Blanche exclaims, "what a fantastic statement! Fantastic of him to say it, fantastic of you to repeat it!" (Williams 544). Blanche's pretense is as real to her as the reality lived by the characters around her. Critics, directors, and reviewers alike find themselves in a continuous search for the message conveyed by this female character.

Tennessee Williams himself experienced struggle in painting a clear image of Blanche's character. His early, unpublished manuscripts that shaped the final version of "A Streetcar Named Desire" remain testimony of the playwright's experiments with a multifaceted Blanche DuBois, a feminine character with potent sexuality and intense predisposition to radical change. These early drafts underline the playwright's struggle in understanding whether Blanche was in fact "the sexual predator or the spiritual victim" (Bak 127), or perhaps everything-in-between these two connotations. The culmination of Blanche's powerful female character rests in between the lines of one of the plays that have shaped twentieth century popular culture.

The Second Sex affirms that there is "no feminine figure—virgin, mother, wife, sister, servant, lover, fierce virtue, smiling odalisque—capable of encapsulating the inconsistent yearnings of men" (Beauvoir 217). That is, until Blanche steps foot on the stage of American drama, encapsulating all images centered on the word *woman*. "How can I be?" she must constantly ask herself. This complex question allows her to investigate deeply her own nature. And this feminine nature,

once released, erupts excessively, in all directions, exceeding all delineations that were once meant to contain it. Blanche is all the feminine ideals she imagines herself to be. In order for Blanche to make a powerful contribution to the world of theater and cinema, she must put on a spectacular show of female excess. Her female theatricality springs precisely from her fascinating ability to reconstruct her persona in the course of the play, enacting the many possibilities contained in the word *woman*.

THE LITTLE GIRL

Blanche, the Little Girl, arrives unexpectedly in a poor neighborhood of New Orleans, the one running between the river and the L&N train tracks, so that she can be with her in-laws. She cries out to Stella, "I want to be near you, got to be with somebody, I can't be alone!" (Williams 477). Her need for protection is emblematic of this first role she recreates. Blanche, the girl, makes her entry dressed in white, "an appearance incongruous with the setting" (Williams 471), thus wearing a color that signifies a state of innocence; the reader quickly learns that Blanche is guided by the astrological sign of the Virgin, and enjoys singing in the tub.

Bathing acquires purification status, a return to a former state of innocence for the child in Blanche. The restorative properties of water bring Blanche back to her role of Little Girl. Once again, "she is young and pure in a beautiful world" (Corrigan 86). Blanche announces gaily, "Here I am, all freshly bathed and scented, and feeling like a brand new human being!" (Williams 486). The singing in the tub, characteristic of little children, shapes her dreamy states of mind. Songs such as "It's only a paper moon" (Williams 530) and "From the land of the sky blue water" (Williams 483) fill out Blanche's world of make-believe.

While Stan keeps busy exposing Blanche's promiscuous past to Stella, stage directions announce, "in the bathroom the water goes on loud; little breathless cries and peals of laughter are heard as if a child were frolicking in the tub" (Williams 532). Thus, we have two Blanches juxtaposed here: the Little Girl and the Prostitute. Refusing to believe Stan's accusations, Stella defends Blanche with the image of the Little Girl, "you didn't know Blanche as a child. Nobody, nobody, was tender and trusting as she was" (Williams 540). As Stan insists on painting a different picture of Blanche, Stella continues, "she was always flighty" as a child (Williams 533). Blanche's overall words, gestures, attire, and actions throughout the play retain the capricious, whimsical aura so characteristic of little children's outlook on life.

Pretend play, a typical trait of the children's universe, is re-enacted by Blanche throughout the drama. Whenever she needs to escape unpleasant circumstances, Blanche uses the telephone. She calls Western Union in attempts to have the operator connect her to a former high school beau, Shep Huntleigh, now a Texas oil millionaire. The telephone becomes "an avenue to a better world" (Martin 88), and a means for Blanche to come up with a plan of escape. Blanche, the Little Girl, also keeps a journal of phrases heard in the Quarter. When Steve yells "that rutting hunk" after Eunice, Blanche bursts in laughter, "Ha-ha! I'm compiling a notebook of quaint little words and phrases I've picked up here" (Williams 513). The need to dream big is always present in Blanche, the Girl. She announces, "How pretty the sky is! I ought to go there on a rocket that never comes down" (Williams 492), in the midst of more serious adult conversations. At night, she is on the lookout for constellations. While gazing up at the sky, reaching for the stars, Blanche dreamily confesses to Mitch, "I'm looking for the Pleiades, the Seven

Sisters, but these girls are not out tonight. Oh, yes, they are, there they are! [...] All in a bunch going home from their little bridge party” (Williams 521). This story unfolds while she takes a last look at the sky before going indoors with Mitch.

Blanche emphasizes her Little Girl role and grants it power the many times she insists upon being called so: she refers to herself as a “single girl,” a “girl alone in the world” (Williams 522), or “a very young girl” (Williams 527). The way she rejoices in little things becomes emblematic of her image as a child: “Oh, those pretty, pretty little candles! Oh, don’t burn them, Stella [...] I hope that his eyes are going to be like candles, like two blue candles lighted in a white cake” (Williams 538). Her dream world is as important as her present reality, if not more. In her desire to connect her dream world somehow, to build bridges with her current reality, Blanche becomes the living embodiment of the Little Girl archetype.

THE OLDER SISTER

In assuming the role of the Older Sister for Stella, Blanche carries it out gently. She addresses Stella in kind terms, denoting the proper care of an older sister: “baby, my baby sister” (Williams 504) or “you messy child, you, you’ve spilt something on that pretty white lace collar” (Williams 475-76). Blanche displays nurturing qualities in her relationship with her younger sister. When Stan hits Stella in a fit of rage, stage directions announce, “with her arms around Stella, Blanche guides her to the outside door and upstairs” (Williams 501). On their way upstairs to Eunice’s apartment, she further comforts her younger sister: “dear, dear little sister, don’t be afraid” (Williams 501). Blanche’s plan for escape from unpleasant realities includes Stella. She dreams that Shep Huntleigh, her Texas beau from high school, will “set us up in a -shop!” (Wil-

liams 507). The start of a new chapter in her life, however delusional it may be, includes her sister as well.

Tennessee Williams paints a well-defined picture of the two sisters, which surfaces by means of their dialogue. When Stella admires Blanche for the vivid energy with which she displays herself to the world, Blanche exclaims: "I've never had your beautiful self-control" (Williams 476). As Blanche usually does much of the talking and storytelling in their sister-relationship, Stella got in the habit of being quiet around Blanche, and she confesses this to Blanche. At the news of Stella's pregnancy, the lines exchanged between the sisters quickly become bright-colored: "Stella, Stella for Star! How lovely to have a baby!" (Williams 491). It is with her sister that Blanche can experience the joy of pure, happy thoughts expressed freely: "I hope candles are going to glow in his life and I hope that his eyes are going to be like candles, like two blue candles lighted in a white cake!" (Williams 538). Without a directed attempt, Stella has the capacity to shine an honest light on Blanche's character.

Blanche paints herself in her most truthful colors when she finds herself in her sister's presence. "That's why I've been—not so awf'ly good lately" (Williams 515), she confesses to Stella. She shares her deep desires with Stella, "I want to rest! I want to breathe quietly again! Yes—I want Mitch ... very badly!" (Williams 517). Blanche believes it is her duty to warn Stella about her present marital situation with someone who is below her in social and cultural rank, "In this dark march toward whatever it is we're approaching Don't—don't hang back with the brutes!" (Williams 511). Blanche does not hold back from exposing herself to Stella in all her womanly flaws. While writing a letter to Shep, Blanche confesses to Stella that she is laughing at herself "for being such a liar" (Williams 511-12). Discussing a possible relationship

with Mitch, Blanche laughs with Stella again: “he thinks I’m sort of—prim and proper, you know!” (Williams 517). The sister-relationship shared between Blanche and Stella helps the audience perceive a Blanche who can be as gentle and nurturing with words as she can be crafty and deceitful.

THE MARTYRED DAUGHTER OF THE SOUTH

Belle Reve stands as the ultimate symbol for Blanche’s theatrical persona as a Martyred Daughter of the South. The remnants of her status as gentlewoman, as ideal Southern Belle have been buried with the “twenty acres of ground” (Williams 491), which include the family graveyard, a visual image that Blanche keeps alive in her thoughts. The valise she makes her appearance with in the French Quarter neighborhood, at the beginning of the play, stands as symbol for all that is left from the glamorous past lived on the family plantation. Opening that trunk and jerking out Blanche’s jewelry, fur pieces, and gold dresses, Stan exclaims to Stella: “Here’s your plantation, or what’s left of it, here!” (Williams 486).

Upon arrival in the Kowalski’s home, she immediately adopts the role of victim with Stella, “you left! I stayed and struggled! You came to New Orleans and looked out for yourself! I stayed at Belle Reve and tried to hold it together! ... all the burden descended on my shoulders” (Williams 478). Blanche continues with her defense, while Stella blames her for the loss of Belle Reve plantation. It is Blanche, in embracing this role of Martyred Daughter, who insists on painting a picture in Stella’s mind of the terrible “blows” she received in her face and in her body: “All of those deaths! The long parade to the graveyard” (Williams 479). Her spiritual and physical wellbeing were affected to some extent. But the exaggeration in her words aims at diverting attention from a possible conversation on Belle Reve’s legal and financial

matters: "You are the one that abandoned Belle Reve, not I! I stayed and fought for it, bled for it, almost died for it! (Williams 479), Blanche continues with a grave tone. Remembering the graveyard parade, she continues, "I saw! Saw! Saw! And now you sit there telling me with your eyes that I let the place go! ... Sit there and stare at me, thinking I let the place go! I let the place go? Where were you? In bed with your—Polack!" (Williams 479-80). Stella simply stares at Blanche, but not with reproachful eyes: she "looks slowly down at her hands folded on the table" (Williams 479). Stella has not a chance for one line, as even Blanche becomes the victim in the Martyred Daughter role she embraces.

Her role as Martyred Daughter of the South ultimately brings her face-to-face with Desire: "The glories of Belle Reve have been founded on the epic fornications of its forebears" (Miller 214), leaving Blanche to suffer the blows, repeatedly. Death brought her face-to-face with Desire, when, following a family pattern, she has become "sexually profligate" (Blackwell 244) with the death of her parents. Male ancestral figures, "improvident grandfathers and fathers and uncles and brothers" (Williams 490), pushed Blanche to embrace desire, the only way out from death's impediment. The role of Martyred Daughter offers Blanche a veil from the truth: Blanche herself is the "last one of the red-hot epic fornicators. It is she who has squandered money on clothes and jewels and luxury vacations to Miami, hoping to snare, if not a husband, at least a lover for the night" (Isaac 168). Her teacher's salary couldn't have kept up with the excessive, luxurious lifestyle she lived for so many years. Ultimately, in her choice to stay as devout companion to her dying parents, the dying Belle Reve estate, and the dying Southern tradition, Blanche is embracing her role as Martyred Daughter of the South.

THE WIFE

From Stella, the reader discovers details about Blanche in her role of Wife. In Stella's view, Blanche becomes the perfect embodiment of devotion. "She married a boy who wrote poetry He was extremely good-looking," Stella confesses. "I think Blanche didn't just love him but worshipped the ground he walked on! Adored him and thought him almost too fine to be human!" (Williams 533). Blanche enacts her role as wife to Allan with passionate attributes.

Blanche remembers herself in her role of Wife, but a role mixed with feelings of guilt. She confesses to Mitch the regrets she has accumulated since Allan's suicide: "all I knew was I'd failed him in some mysterious way" (Williams 527). "The searchlight which had been turned on the world was turned off again and never for one moment since has there been any light" (Williams 528), Blanche further tells Mitch. This searchlight, which slipped through her fingers with Allan's suicide, remains a living symbol for Blanche's regret at the way she ultimately handled her role as Wife. The "I saw! I know! You disgust me" (Williams 528) phrase she whispers in Allan's year on the dance floor, before his suicide, becomes reminiscent of her ultimate failure in her role of wife, one which contrasts deeply with the companionship love she has lived with Allan after their union, "all at once and much, much too completely" (Williams 527).

With Mitch, Blanche desires to become the Wife again. She, in her prospective role of married woman, desires to build a stable life in a community she feels respected and safe." She confesses to Stella just how "very badly" she wants Mitch because she wants to rest and to "breathe quietly again" (Williams 517). If Mitch believed in her and accepted her as Wife, Blanche would truly become what she has pretended she is: a faithful woman for Mitch.

THE MOTHER

Blanche is celebrated as the Mother-Woman of the play. "She is the Phallic Mother" (46), critic Calvin Bedient boldly affirms in his essay "There Are Lives that Desire Does Not Sustain: A Streetcar Named Desire." Her image as the Phallic Mother is gradually built by him, uncovering the subtle tensions that surface along the lines of the play between Blanche, in her role of Mother, and Stanley, her male antagonist. Stan experiences the pull of the archaic Mother (Bedient 55) with Blanche's entry into his household. He sees her as the feminizing abjection he fears in himself, so "she must be put down" (Bedient 56). The term "abjection" is borrowed by Bedient from Kristeva's exposition of the theory of the abject presented in "Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection."

The abject is "that which disturbs identity, system, order causes abjection" (Kristeva 4). Blanche doesn't respect borders, positions, or rules. She refers to the males playing poker in the kitchen as "little boys" and calls upon them in such terms throughout the play: "Hello! The Little Boys' Room is busy right now" (Williams 497). She confronts and provokes Stanley whenever given the opportunity, "What's in the back of that little boy's mind of yours?" (Williams 489). In Kristeva's view, the other sex, the feminine, is synonymous with a radical evil that is to be suppressed (70), a feared feminine that threatens Stanley's established order. Stan's confrontation with the feminine abjection, that is, Blanche as the Mother-Woman, is inevitable in the Kowalski's household when Blanche becomes an uninvited guest at the dinner table.

"The man who finds his true wife has found his mother" (53), Camille Paglia affirms in *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson*. For Mitch, Blanche

becomes one with his own mother. She offers him an alternative image of a sick and dying mother, one that is attractive, vibrant: “she won’t live long. Maybe just a few months. [...] She wants me to be settled before she—” (Williams 527). Mitch needs a Mother figure before he needs a Wife figure in his life: “I gotta a sick mother. She doesn’t go to sleep until I come in at night” (Williams 493). He further confesses to Blanche, “I’ll be alone when she goes” (Williams 493). The fleeting summer that Mitch spends in the company of Blanche offers him a getaway from the sickness that took over his household. The intense filial attachment that Mitch harbors for his dying mother is acknowledged by his poker buddies. “Hurry back and we’ll fix you a sugar-tit” (Williams 493), Stan hollers at Mitch whenever the latter turns sensitive. The reader can only imagine the emotional depth of Mitch’s remark, after learning about Blanche’s promiscuous past: “You’re not clean enough to bring in the house with my mother” (Williams 547). In his eyes, Blanche was slowly replacing his dying mother, all the more reason that Mitch does not accept living with such a perverse image of his own mother in his mind.

THE PROSTITUTE

Blanche is one of the first female characters in drama to be so overt about her sexual needs. Always acting on her impulses, embracing all her fleeting desires, Blanche becomes an excessive woman. Her immediate concerns with sensual pleasures gain her a licentious reputation. Thus, Blanche becomes the Prostitute over the course of the play.

However, Blanche stands ready to justify her theatrical persona as the Prostitute to her sister Stella: “I wasn’t so good the last two years or so. [...] It was all storm-all storm, and

I was—caught in the center" (Williams 515). Through Blanche's eyes, her licentious behavior in the town of Laurel, where she was teaching, is a direct consequence of the blows and deaths she suffered through at Belle Reve. Blanche herself follows a family pattern, as she becomes the last of the epic fornicators that she mentions to Stanley, and the first one to be a woman, for that matter.

A Freudian perspective on the subject of female prostitution sheds a new light on Blanche's underlying reasons for her actions. Happiness, which is the whole purpose of human life in Freud's view, aims to eliminate pain and discomfort and to experience intense pleasures (15). Thus, Blanche embraces a personal task: that of avoiding pain at all costs. Furthermore, her many intimacies with strangers are indicative of her immediate desires for happiness. "Civilization is built up on renunciation of instinctual gratifications" (37), Freud continues, and Blanche refuses to comply. She defends her "claim to individual freedom against the will of the multitude" (35), that is, her community. However, she does try to repress her Prostitute role in the scene with the attractive paperboy: "Now, run along, now, quickly! It would be nice to keep you, but I've got to be good—and keep my hands off children" (Williams 520).

The only outlet for the liberty of instinct, which is not censored, according to Freud, is heterosexual love, but this is further circumscribed by the barriers of legitimacy and monogamy (45). And Blanche's desire to become prim and proper for Mitch's sake underlines a basic understanding of the nature of restrictions that are put in place for individual liberty by the claims of culture. Marriage will ensure legitimacy of her physical desires within the community she operates. However, her role as the Prostitute prevents her from break-

ing away from the past. Mitch breaks their compromise once Blanche's past is exposed by Stan.

To Stanley Kowalski, this woman, whose promiscuous past was revealed to him from multiple sources, who gave free sexual favors to soldiers, and even seduced one of her high school students, has truly earned the treatment he shows her at the end. Critic June Schlueter believes that the rape provides the reader with an aesthetic whole. "However repugnant, it affirms Blanche's reality of Stan as 'grunting and hulking'" (76). Furthermore, the act of rape validates Stan's perception of Blanche as prostitute. And for that one moment, "she sees herself through his eyes" (Harris 95). Until this moment, Blanche embraced her past deeds from one point of view only: the one she presented to Stella. Now, prostitution becomes real for Blanche, witnessed from Stan's perspective.

Blanche deliberately chooses the Prostitute role because it suits her momentary desires. Critic Mark Winchell entertains the idea that Mitch, as Blanche's husband, "would probably arrive home one afternoon to find his wife in the sack with some less hesitant newsboy" (138). It seems that Blanche cannot escape her instincts. The fulfillment of her immediate desires has always made up the essence of her womanly character.

THE FEMININE OTHER

Blanche's turning into an Other must be understood within the context of her power struggle with Stan. What the reader witnesses here is the dynamics of Foucault's repressive hypothesis at work in William's play. Kleb's essay, "Marginalia: Streetcar, Williams, and Foucault," offers a critical perspective on the play that rests upon Foucault's ideology.

Blanche's Feminine Other and Stanley's the Same are central concepts in understanding this theoretical framework of reference (Kleb 29). The Feminine Other seeks to redefine and even control The Same. As soon as she arrives in Stan's home, Blanche rearranges furniture and redecorates to please her own taste. She devises plans to escape with Stella and offends Stan multiple times, attempting to pull her sister away from him. "But I'll think of something, I've got to think of—something! Don't laugh at me Stella!" (Williams 508), Blanche keeps uttering while making definite plans for both to run away from Stan. The latter confesses to Stella, "Wasn't we happy together? Wasn't it all okay? Till she showed here. Hoity-toity, describing me as an ape" (Williams 541).

Blanche, the Feminine Other, is the intruder, the marginal figure, and the unannounced guest who seeks control of the Same, Kowalski's household: "Don't—don't hang back with the brutes!" (Williams 511), claims she. Since Blanche is perceived as a "sign for sexual maladjustment" (Kleb 30), her illegitimate sexuality must be confined, either to the brothel or the mental hospital. The exclusion and confinement of the Other into one of the 3 modern institutions: clinic, prison, or asylum, represents the bread of Foucault's repressive hypothesis.

The Feminine Other reveals a Blanche who is dangerous and threatening to any established order, a Blanche "in its most threatening and entrancing (to the male) aspects: enchantress, witch, and faery queen" (Kleb 36). Williams offers subtle hints that further frame Blanche within this primordial Feminine Other. Blanche's astrological planet is the moon; she is to be seen only at night. "You never want to go out till after six and then it's always some place that's not lighted" (Williams 544), affirms Mitch; she is "light as a feather" (Williams 524); Blanche refers to herself as a "witch of

woman" who is "casting a spell" (Williams 488); she admits to Stella that she might "swoop down on Dallas" (Williams 512) to unexpectedly visit Shep Huntleigh, her former beau; and Stan wonders at times: "what is this sister of yours, a deep-sea diver who brings up sunken treasures?" (Williams 485). Meanwhile, Stan is the Same, the "absolute monarch" (Kleb 37). He brings up the Napoleonic Code in the discussion about Belle Reve's loss at the hands of Blanche. And he reminds the sisters that he is "the king around here, so don't forget it" (Williams 537).

The immediate punishment inflicted on Blanche, in her role as the Feminine Other, comes in the form of confinement, in her case, the mental institution. But the Feminine Other has changed Stan's world of Sameness. The possibility of her truth being real—her rape confession to Stella—represents the "relocation of The Other in man's own nature, within the same" (Kleb 41). Stella sees Stan differently now, through her sister's eyes. Blanche has implanted her seed of truth in Kowalski's household and moves on, embracing the calling of her last desires.

THE FEMME FATALE

In a letter about the play's conception, Williams addresses Elia Kazan, director of "A Streetcar Named Desire," confessing that Stanley sees Blanche as a "calculating bitch with round heels" and not as a desperate creature backed into a last corner of resort (95-96). Thus, Blanche becomes the embodiment of the Femme Fatale archetype. The Femme Fatale's attributes are meant to highlight the temptation that is aroused in men when in her presence: she wears glamorous gowns, heels, gloves, and shiny jewelry or delicate flower accessories; she is manipulative and employs her sexual charms

as a tool; and she is involved in murder or suicide. Blanche plays the *Femme Fatale* in the course of the play.

Blanche arrives in the French Quarter "daintily dressed in a white suit with a fluffy bodice, necklace and earrings of pearl, white gloves and hat" (Williams 471). Throughout the play, Blanche's shows a preference for "feathers and furs," for "fox-pieces," for "solid-gold dresses" (Williams 485), for red or white evening gowns. She wears shiny jewelry, "bracelets of solid gold" and "ropes of pearls" (Williams 486), "silver slippers with brilliant sets in their heels" (Williams 548), "and artificial violets" (Williams 556) pinned to her attire.

In her *Femme Fatale* role, Blanche uses her sexuality successfully. She laughs at Stanley, calls him a "little boy," playfully sprays him with her atomizer (Williams 489), invites him to button her dress, asks for a drag on his cig (Williams 487), and belittles him by calling him a "Polack" (Williams 539). She even confesses to Stella, "I laughed and treated it all as a joke, called him a little boy and laughed—and flirted! Yes—I was flirting with your husband, Stella!" (Williams 491). Blanche's only weapon is her sexuality, which is meant to be used "to save her from being held responsible for the loss of *Belle Reve*" (Griffin 57). The minute she realizes that Mitch could offer her social position and stability through marriage, she begins using her sexuality further: "she takes off the blouse and stands in her pink silk brassiere and white skirt in the light thru the portieres" (Williams 496). When Stan realizes that Mitch's gaze has switched from the cards on the table to her alluring image in the shadow of the portieres, he "jumps up and jerks roughly at curtains to close them" (Williams 497), as if jealous of Mitch's eye gazing. Blanche announces airily that "The Little Boys' Room is busy right now" (Williams 497). In her *Femme Fatale* role, Blanche

places herself in a strategic position in Stan's home. Her flirting and provocative behavior secures her a potential husband, Mitch, but also Stan's understanding of the financial considerations behind the loss of Belle Reve plantation—until Stan overhears her remarks to Stella, calling him “common,” “an animal,” “sub-human,” “ape,” and “a brute” (Williams 510-11). From now on, she becomes a dangerous enemy for Stan.

What makes Stanley right in Elia Kazan's view is precisely his perception of Blanche in her role of *Femme Fatale*: “he's got things the way he wants them ... and does not want them upset by a phony, corrupt, sick ... woman” (qtd. in Kolin 11). Blanche is destructive and dangerous and strikes fear in Stanley's subconscious mind. She could potentially ruin his marriage and Stan is sharply aware of this, “not once did you pull any wool over this boy's eyes!” (Williams 552). Her intention to wreck his home is made clear to Stella when she openly plans an escape for both with Shep Huntleigh, Blanche's high school beau. Hence, Stanley cannot be blamed for protecting his marriage against this *Femme Fatale*, who seeks to undermine his position.

Her sexual encounters with strangers at the Flamingo Hotel and her countless dates with the soldiers from the camp show that Blanche uses her sexuality as a tool, with no attachment involved. These male strangers and soldiers are “sex objects for her ... she uses them every bit as much as they, presumably, use her” (Morrow 64). When Mitch confronts Blanche with her promiscuous past at the Flamingo Hotel, she declares, “that's where I brought my victims. Yes, I had many intimacies with strangers” (Williams 545-46). About her sexual encounters with soldiers from the camp close to Belle Reve, Blanche speaks freely as well. She even compares them to “daisies” being “picked by the paddy-wagon” (Williams 547). Excess

becomes an important trait for Blanche in her role of *Femme Fatale*. She becomes a bad woman who defies her Southern community's moral code of feminine behavior.

Blanche's acts of excess—sex, alcohol, fashion, lies, and pretense—turned her into "one of the most mesmerizing of sexual personae" (Paglia 13). Camille Paglia proclaims the *Femme Fatale* as the primary image of a "daemonic archetype of woman" (13). At times, Blanche's face brightens up at the news of violence. When Steve strikes Eunice and the sound of a man's angry roar is heard, along with overturned furniture (Williams 512), Blanche asks (brightly): "Did he kill her?" (Williams 512). Her mistreatment of her husband Allan drives him to suicide. According to Dean Shackelford, Blanche becomes the "villain" in that she destroys the homosexual poet with her cruelty (198). "I saw! I know! You disgust me ..." (Williams 528) are the last words whispered in the poet's ear before he fires his revolver into his mouth.

Blanche, in her role of *Femme Fatale*, exits the play triumphantly. Her rape does not represent the tragic fall of a feminine character. In the struggle for power between the two sexes, Stan may seem to be triumphant, since the destructive Blanche is removed from his home. But Stanley has to go on with his life, involved in lies and resentment now, while Blanche abandons the toxic place to live her last desires and dreams in quietude. Blanche brings the ruin of a great friendship shared with Mitch, who shouts after Stan: "I'll kill you" (Williams 563); she gets her sister, Stella, to see Stan in a new light by the end of the play. She calls him "drunk" and "animal thing" (Williams 500), and feels she cannot trust him completely, ever again. Blanche walks out with the doctor, holding his hand, smiling, "without turning" (Williams 564) to face Stan, Mitch, or Stella, even once.

THE GROTESQUE FEMALE

A central aspect of the grotesque in relationship to the feminine is the exaggeration of the female into a “fantastically consuming monster” (Saddik 13). William’s focus on excess and transformation with the character of Blanche DuBois turns her into a feminine character who is “sicker than necessary” (Saddik 12). The consuming Blanche, who cannot quench her appetite, becomes sick with excessive consumption: lemon cokes, alcohol, sex, sparkling jewelry, and glamorous dresses. Her excessive appetite turns Blanche into a grotesque figure, and the grotesque woman of western culture is linked to social and sexual deviances (Skelly 57). Pouring herself another drink, Blanche further adds to this Western paradigm: “The Tarantula Arms ... Yes, a big spider! That’s where I brought my victims. Yes, I had many intimacies with strangers.” (Williams 545-46). The monstrous feminine embodies everything about woman that is “shocking, terrifying, horrific, abject” (Skelly 38). In comparing herself to a spider, Blanche’s male counterparts become victims of her deviant and devouring physical appetite.

The spider symbol associated with the feminine evokes “images of the non-linear, of the many directions in which something can go, the many sources for it” (Skelly 63). Blanche, in her Grotesque Female role, destabilizes the linear order, creates alternative centers, “bulging and bursting through the steams of the rational and the stable” (Saddik 10-11). Margin and center coexist; contradictions flow freely with the full support of Blanche’s theatrical persona. The grotesque body, indulgent and excessive, celebrates the physical pleasures of sexuality. Although Blanche keeps her promiscuous past hidden, once this is revealed, she celebrates desire as champion over death. When Mitch confronts her with the many sexual encounters of her past, Blanche calls death into question,

affirming, "The opposite is desire. So do you wonder? How could you possibly wonder?" (Williams 547).

The grotesque is only recognizable in relation to a norm (Skelly 38), and exceeding that norm involves serious risk. Blanche risked and lost a stable social position at the side of Mitch. When confronted with the norm, that is, Blanche's community, she belittles its power of confining individual liberties and of making cheap accusations of such intimate nature: Mitch tells her, "three people, Kiefaber, Stanley, and Shaw, swore to them!" To this accusation, Blanche responds, "Rub-a-dub-dub, three men in a tub! And such a filthy tub!" (Williams 545). Her play with language brings about a certain comic nuance in the face of these severe accusations thrown at her.

Blanche, in her role of the Grotesque Female, is saved by her laughter. She exits with the doctor, hand-in-hand, one more time depending on the kindness of a stranger, to live her last dreamy wishes. Saddik affirms that "the comic element in the grotesque is that saving element, a creative vision in face of destructive forces" (136). In light of this spirit of "going on," for which Williams is famous, he explores the regenerative power of the grotesque through Blanche's character.

THE FEMALE ARTIST

In one of the letters sent to Maria St. Just, his confidante and critic, Tennessee Williams confessed, "when I think about her, Blanche seems like the youth of our hearts which has to be put away for worldly considerations: poetry, music, the early soft feelings that we can't afford to live with under a naked light bulb which is now" (Williams 113-14). Blanche herself confesses towards the end of the play that, locked in her heart, she possesses "beauty of the mind and richness of the spirit

and tenderness of the heart” (Williams 551). Her use of poetic language throughout the play, her appreciation of art, her play with reality and fantasy, her rebellious spirit and love of freedom celebrate Blanche in her role of Female Artist.

Blanche’s use of language “distorts the world, but recreates it, reshuffles the cards, perpetuates a pattern” (Marrow 65). Looking out the window at the L&N streetcar lines, she tells Stella that “out there I suppose is the ghoulish haunted woodland of Weir” (Williams 474). Blanche wanders through words to fuel her artistic sense. She speaks her truths in poetry and songs. Expressing her distaste with the Kowalski apartment, Blanche exclaims that “only Poe! Only Mr. Edgar Allan Poe!—could do it justice!” (Williams 474). In light of her chosen profession of teaching literature, Blanche appreciates music and art. Throughout the play, she recites sonnet lines by Browning; she hears a polka tune, the Varsouviana, constantly ringing in her ear. She appreciates radio tunes while bathing and constantly sings romantic songs in the tub.

Blanche pours her creative energy into her own persona, “attempting to re-create herself as an art object: a living embodiment of the ideal Southern Belle—young, lovely, genteel, flirtatious, and alluringly fragile” (Harris 90). She confesses to Stanley that a woman’s charms are fifty percent illusion and she admits to Stella that she is recreating her image for Mitch, “what I mean is—he thinks I’m sort of—prim and proper, you know. (She laughs out sharply). I want to deceive him enough to make him want me” (Williams 517). Throughout her dates with Mitch, Blanche allows her fantasy to sweep through: “we are going to pretend that we are sitting in a little artists’ café on the Left bank in Paris. (she lights a candle stub and pits it in a bottle). Je suis la Dame aux Camellias! Vous etes—Armand!” (Williams 523). The paperboy who is

collecting for *The Evening Star* is a young prince for Blanche, "young man! Has anyone ever told you that you look like a young Prince out of the Arabian Nights?" (Williams 519). And she steals a kiss from him before he departs.

Blanche's desire to play with reality and fantasy further enhances her rebellious spirit, one that is misunderstood by other characters in the play. But this spirit of her is part of the artistic pursuit in life for Blanche, a pursuit that enrages Stan: "there isn't a goddam thing but imagination! ... And lies and conceit and tricks! ... And look at yourself! Take a look at yourself in that worn-out Mardi Gras outfit ... and with that crazy crown on!" (Williams 552). When she tells Mitch how the polka music dies out in her mind, the latter simply asks, "are you boxed out of your mind?" (Williams 543). Blanche's artistic desire is to beautify her surroundings and that is why she insists on offering people what they need, all in the spirit of "magic," which ought to be accepted in the face of a bleak reality.

Dan Isaac, in "No Past to Think in: Who Wins in *A Streetcar Named Desire*?" believes that Blanche is inspired with the vision and passion of a "biblical prophet," showing concern for the future and the evolution of the human species (166). She tells Stella that "in this dark march towards whatever it is we're approaching ... Don't—don't hang back with the brutes!" (Williams 511). Her desire is to transmit value and ideals, "such things as art—as poetry and music—such kinds of new light have come into the world since then!" (Williams 511). Elia Kazan honored Blanche's artistic sense, confessing, "her love of art and beauty is noble" (Kolin 10). Her poetic observations, "those cathedral bells—they're the only clean thing in the Quarter" (Williams 558) heighten Blanche's artistic sense throughout the play.

Blanche's indulging in fantasy and illusion, her creative ways of interacting with the immediate environment bring out the Female Artist in her throughout the play. Transformation is part of Blanche's artistic pursuit. She transforms herself over the course of the play and her sister's marriage: by the end of the play, Stella and Stan's relationship is forever altered. Her play with magic and illusions permanently touches the reality of other characters in the play. But Blanche never lied in her heart, never inside (Williams 546). She simply recreates the world to represent her own artistic sense. And this artistic sense of hers propels the engine of Blanche's archetypal development in one body, one image—one that pushes for a demanding and intense role for any actor or actress seeking to interpret her character. In just such a fashion, Williams presents his slippery, evasive, and all-encompassing character in a play that might be said to emphasize many of those same simultaneously ethereal, engrossing, and sometimes even grossly materialistic marvels.

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The Princess is a Whore

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by Erin Fleet

ABSTRACT

Sigmund Freud's creation of the "Madonna-Whore" dichotomy has forever changed the way in which women are perceived in different forms of media and society as a whole. The three categories of the dichotomy are not necessarily wrong but are not categories at all; they are a journey that all women go through as they learn about their sexuality. While many want to criticize this journey and place women in just one stage forever, it is only a natural part of life and can be seen virtually everywhere. From the story of Adam and Eve, to original stories of the princesses like Cinderella, and even today in the lives of celebrities like Beyoncé, this paper discusses the way these women go through a journey of sexuality that seems to be viewed in a negative manner. It looks into the role that social media plays in allowing for this negativity to be given a platform in a time where there is an overwhelming amount of pressure on women and a very present rape culture.

Keywords: sexuality, princess, celebrity, rape culture, Beyoncé, Miley Cyrus, Kim Kardashian, Sigmund Freud, military, women, social media

La princesa es una puta

RESUMEN

La dicotomía «Madonna-puta» de Sigmund Freud ha cambiado para siempre la forma en que las mujeres son percibidas en diferentes formas de los medios y la sociedad en general.

Las tres categorías de la dicotomía no son necesariamente incorrectas, pero no son categorías en absoluto; son un viaje por el que pasan todas las mujeres mientras aprenden sobre su sexualidad. Muchos critican este viaje e intentan colocar a las mujeres en una sola etapa para siempre. Desde la historia de Adán y Eva hasta cuentos populares y de hadas de princesas como Cenicienta, y hasta celebridades contemporáneas como Beyoncé, el viaje de las mujeres a través de la sexualidad se enmarca constantemente de manera negativa. Las presiones públicas, las redes sociales y los prejuicios personales juegan un papel importante al permitir que esta negatividad se ponga en práctica, lo que se suma a la cantidad ya excesiva de presión sobre las mujeres en una cultura abiertamente misógina.

Palabras clave: sexualidad, princesa, celebridad, cultura de violación, Beyoncé, Miley Cyrus, Kim Kardashian, Sigmund Freud, fuerzas militares, mujeres, redes sociales

这个公主是妓女

摘要

西格蒙德·弗洛伊德的“圣母-妓女”二分法概念已永远改变了女性作为一个整体在不同媒体和社会中被感知的方式。这种二分法的三个类别并不是必然错误，但也完全不是类别；它们是所有女性在了解性时的一次旅程。许多人批判该旅程，并企图将女性永远置于（其中）一个阶段。从亚当与夏娃的故事、公主的童话（例如灰姑娘），到例如碧昂斯等当代名人，女性的性旅程一直以一种消极的方式被定义。来自公众的压力、社交媒体、个人偏见都在“为这种消极性提供平台”一事中发挥作用，加剧了这个公开的厌女文化中对女性造成的过度压力。

关键词：性，公主，名人，强奸文化，碧昂斯，麦莉·赛勒斯，金·卡戴珊，西格蒙德·弗洛伊德，军队，女性，社交媒体

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps one of the most degrading things that a person can do to another human being is to compartmentalize them and take away their potential. Sigmund Freud was a genius at not only this, but also underestimating the power that a woman possesses to do or be what she chooses. Due to his misogynistic way of thinking, he created “The Madonna-Whore Complex,” which is the epitome of placing someone into a category and not allowing for movement. In simple terms, this theory says that women can be virgins, whores, or mothers, but can never fit into all three categories, because men fear a powerful woman. They want to love and eventually marry someone who is a “good girl,” but then want someone who is “bad” to fulfill their sexual desires, ignoring the fact that women have the capacity to do and be both. This is where men have learned to judge and therefore place women in a box, because the idea that a woman can be intelligent, nurturing, and sexually independent is foreign. However, the issue is not necessarily that these categories are wrong; the problem is that they are not categories at all, but rather a series of stages representing a journey. Unfortunately, the concept of a journey is never adequately explained, and these categories are taught to children at a young age through fairy tales, like the ones about princesses. As a result, all that is perceived is that women are meant to stay in one stage their whole life and are weak without a man. Whether people want to admit it or not, women are capable of going through each stage; princesses are no exception, since it is a part of life. The Grimm Brothers’ tales of *Sleeping Beauty*, *Snow White*, and

Cinderella best exemplify this theory, but they also prove that a woman can, in fact, possess the ability to be all three, even though society today deems that impossible.

The Madonna-Whore dichotomy is much more complex and deeply rooted in history than one would think. The virgin is not just a prude—she is a fresh and open-minded woman who is learning her place in society. The whore is not someone who looks for sex with a different man every night, but is a woman with a newfound confidence in herself to explore her desires. Finally, the mother is not simply a woman who bears children: she is a woman who is knowledgeable and respectable because she evolved from the previous two stages. It is possible and more believable that a woman must become all three of these characters at some point in their lives and the tales of princesses in the Grimm Brothers' storybook prove just that. However, men have this idea ingrained in their brains that women can only be thought of as one or the other and never both, let alone all three. It started with Eve in the Bible and still continues to persist in modern society. The only way men, and people as a whole, will rid their brains of this way of thought is for them to change it. Women have accepted themselves, but the problem is that men fear intelligent, sexy, and responsible women. In today's world, men continue to think in this negative manner and fear sexually independent women, which unfortunately allows sexism and rape culture to live on (Forsmo-Shadid). These kinds of powerful women exist and are especially prevalent in media today; technology and the use of social media have made it so that their lives are fully transparent for people to observe. However, many of them, like Beyoncé, Kim Kardashian, and Miley Cyrus, have chosen to embody all three stages of the dichotomy, fully aware of the uproar it could cause.

SIGMUND FREUD

As the founder of psychoanalysis, a theory intended to help understand and explain human behavior, Freud was a great believer in childhood experiences being influential on one's life. He lived during the Victorian era, where women were not supposed to express any sexual desires, so he believed that women who did were ill or whores (McLeod). He did not see women as adding anything of importance to life and even believed that "women's lives were dominated by their sexual reproductive functions" (Cherry). Based on this thought process, he created the five psychosexual stages of development, a progression of human behavior that shows how an "adult's personality is determined by childhood experiences" (McLeod). Freud argued that the Madonna-Whore complex comes from these childhood experiences, which is why they grow into men who possess this way of thought. Mothers are the objects of desire when boys are infants in what Freud called "the oral stage"; this is where the separation of mothers and whores begins (Cherry). Men have a sexual attraction to "bad women," who they simply see as sexual objects for their pleasure and nothing more. This is why they can never have a sexual desire for women with the same kind of innocence as their mothers, and they also want their wives to be pure (Stockhill). Freud summed up his theory by saying, "Where such men love they have no desire and where they desire, they cannot love" (Stockhill). This separation was caused by a man and his anxiety around his feelings toward women and has not stopped existing in some of the most popular forms of media, even ones aimed at children.

FAIRY TALE PRINCESSES

Most people have a general idea of who the most famous fairy tale princesses are—for example, Sleeping Beauty—

and how their stories play out. However, not many people look beyond the “happily ever after,” because what they would find is much darker and controversial. In the original story, Sleeping Beauty’s fairy godmothers gift her with beauty, grace, and the ability to sing; she is also cursed to prick her finger on a spinning wheel and fall into unconsciousness, which she does (“Sleeping Beauty”). The young Sleeping Beauty introduced in the beginning of the story is just a baby, but because the fairies give her all these glorious gifts, she is immediately thought of to be perfect and pure—a virgin. She is as vulnerable and curious as a virgin, which leads to her falling into the trap that the fairies had warned her parents of at her christening (Tanzer). This idea that the authors hinted at, that the virgin is a curious being, regardless of any warnings, is not false, but it only makes sense that her curiosity will catch up to her one day. In this moment, Sleeping Beauty becomes a whore, and it is not because she has begun sleeping around (as thought by many in society today), but it is because of a phallic spindle, which sends her into a deathly sleep (McGoogan). She gave into her curious virgin urges of her own accord, trying to get what she wanted and become more independent. Now the only way to be awoken from the “whore phase,” which in this case can be described as an unconscious state, is to have a man come and save the day. It is ironic that what cures her is the physical version of a man, while the imagery of one is what sent her into the trance to begin with. Thus, the curiosity of a man is what creates the whore, as if it is the fault of the woman, who is simply exploring her sexual identity. Then, true love’s kiss (keyword: *true*) is used to save the princess so that she and the handsome prince can be married, allowing Sleeping Beauty to evolve into the final stage, a mother. Readers of this tale would not want to admit that she becomes a whore at one point, but the truth is that she does and so do many other princesses.

Like Sleeping Beauty, the tale of Snow White begins with the birth of a beautiful baby girl, now the new princess. Snow White is known for her unbelievably beauty with unique features of being “white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as ebony wood” (“Little Snow-White”). Snow White is pure at heart and unaware of her beauty, giving her the characteristics of a virgin, like Sleeping Beauty. When the evil queen discovers that she herself is no longer the fairest in the land, she employs a huntsman to go kill Snow and bring back “her lungs and liver” (a detail left out in the Disney movie for some reason) (“Little Snow-White”). However, the huntsman is unable to do this once he lays eyes on her, because she is so stunning; it is almost as if the authors were writing to the modern-day theory that pretty girls get everything handed to them. In this part of the story, Snow White begs for the huntsman to let her live, unknowingly using her looks to get free, which begins her evolution into a whore. If this were to have a modern twist, the huntsman would blame Snow White for distracting him from getting his job done, which would again make her a whore. She is forced into the forest, alone and nervous, due to the creatures lurking around every tree. This returns Snow White to the virgin phase, as she is vulnerable to what is around her until she stumbles upon a small house and the seven dwarves. Looking at this next part of the story through the eyes of modern society, Snow White would be considered the biggest whore of them all, as she begins living with seven men (Kingett). At first, the dwarves are confused by the mess in their house; then, they are excited to have someone so gorgeous in their house that they make a deal with her: if she “keep house for them, she shall have everything she wants” (“Little Snow-White”). Here, she is both whore and mother, because she is doing exactly what men want (cleaning and cooking) while still being a beautiful woman that men love and fawn over. What is differ-

ent about this story is the fact that she is not saved from her unconsciousness by a kiss from the handsome prince (as the Disney portrayal would have it) and yet she is still “saved” by the prince who immediately sees her and falls in love (“Little Snow-White”). She is awoken from her mindless sleep, another way of naming the whore phase, and placed into the hands of the prince, who is what every woman should want, according to society (Monsters & Muses). They are married and she now has fully evolved into the mother or Madonna stage.

Finally, we have Cinderella, perhaps the most famous princess of them all and the one that many young girls dress up for Halloween and dream of one day becoming. This princess may have the purest of heart of all, because she puts up with a horrible family who make her do terrible tasks. She was mocked and ridiculed by her stepsisters and made to do everything in the household. She was a virgin in the beginning, not because she was said to have had the most heavenly looks, but because she is naïve and submissive to the needs of her stepfamily (Monsters & Muses). She must do whatever is asked of her, because she craves the love of her evil stepmother and feels this is the only way to do so. Weakness is not a trait of virgins necessarily, but “it is important when understanding the virgin journey not to be afraid to admit the virgin lacks power, just as the hero initially refuses the call” (Hudson). What characterizes the other princesses as virgins is their innocence, but for Cinderella, it is her lack of strength; this means that she has to go through the rest of the stages, otherwise the rest of story would not play out the way it does. This also means her progression through the stages is little more symbolic and a bit less erotic. Her first step towards becoming a whore is when she realizes that she wants to go to the festival and be a normal girl (“Cinderella”). She continues to seek the approval of her stepmother, doing

whatever is asked of her, but now she is doing what it takes to get what she wants; she is learning to become independent. Nothing stops Cinderella and she eventually meets the prince for all three days of the festival, of course looking absolutely incredible and making herself irresistible to the prince. She still has not fully evolved into the whore stage because instead of giving into her desires to be with the prince, she runs away (Hudson). Cinderella bounces back and forth between the first two stages like a lot of women do, because again, being a whore does not mean sleeping with every man on the street as men have been made to believe. Instead it is the confidence in acknowledging that women have needs that must be fulfilled, as all humans do, and accepting that it is okay to go after those needs. This idea can even be found with Eve and her desire to eat the apple in the Garden of Eden; after eating the apple, she became “the archetype of the Whore, the original slut” (Greer). Perhaps this is where it all began in terms of men judging women, believing they must be a virgin, a whore, or a mother, even though technically Eve was all three, later evolving into “the mother of mankind” (Greer). Like Eve, Cinderella reaches all three stages, with the final being motherhood, which comes after her marriage to the prince, a common theme throughout these three fairy tales. Once this pattern has been detected, it is hard not to see it everywhere: it can be found in famous movies, TV shows, and books, and it continues to make its way into the real world.

CELEBRITIES IN THE MODERN WORLD

A great deal of pressure is placed on those in the music or movie industries because of the influence musicians and actors have over their fans, which only grows as their popularity increases. Most would agree that Beyoncé is one of the most famous female singers and that millions of people

listen to her voice. She is beautiful, talented, and has a great body, which she has had no problem showing off since her beginning years ago in Destiny's Child (a famous girl group). One could say that this was the start of her journey into three stages of the dichotomy: first, the virgin phase, when she belonged to the popular girl group, as she was young and vulnerable within the music industry. As she branched off from the band, she began to find immense fame as a solo artist, even gaining a reputation as "Queen B" due to the way she performed and how fierce of a woman she presented herself as. However, like many other female artists, she was criticized for expressing her sexuality through her music, earning the title of whore. Despite this, she became a powerful woman figure, in her dance moves, fashion, and lyrics. In her song "Flawless," for example, she sings, "You should aim to be successful but not too successful otherwise you will threaten the man" and "We teach girls they cannot be sexual beings in the way boys are" (Knowles *Flawless* lines 22- 28). She has no problem trying to erase the stereotypes that she felt were threatening the world around her, which she continued to do, song after song. One of her most famous songs, "Single Ladies," even poked fun at men and the way they do not take sexy and strong women seriously, and as she says, "put a ring on it" (Knowles *Single Ladies* line 26). Her choice to embrace her sexuality for the world to see is how she began to evolve into the next stage, motherhood.

Beyoncé made the transition into motherhood when she married rap star Jay-Z and gave birth to three children, but unfortunately the media did not seem to think she had left the whore phase quite yet. After her 2014 Grammy performance, a British newspaper called UK Metro ran the headline "'Whore' Beyoncé angers parents with raunchy act" in their column the next day (Harmsworth). Parents were asked

to weigh in on the matter and many were quoted in the paper as “being disappointed with her classless performance” and were outraged, saying, “a mother should never act this way” (Harmsworth). Of course, this has not prevented Knowles from becoming the feminist music goddess she is today. Later on that year, Forbes named her the “World’s Most Powerful Celebrity” (Knight). When she became a mother, her reputation as a sexually independent woman was only strengthened, as many believed her to be “reshaping the traditional constraints on women in their roles as mothers and wives” (Knight). At the 2017 Grammys, she took the stage in a stunning gold dress with matching crown, looking almost like the Virgin Mary, as she preached about her pride in being both a mother and a singer (Carothers). In this speech she explained that, “Your mother is a woman and women like her cannot be contained,” which ultimately shatters the view that Freud held about a women’s ability to only fit into one of the stages of the dichotomy (Carothers). She continually reinforces the idea that a woman can be sexy and successful while also being a mother and a wife, a concept that Kim Kardashian is also very familiar with.

The Kardashian name, whether associated with good press or bad, is one that most of the world has heard of. Many people question why this family is so famous in media, since their father Robert Kardashian was famous in the world of law, as he defended OJ Simpson in his murder trial. However, due to the media coverage of the trial, the Kardashian family also found themselves in the spotlight as the girls (Kim, Khloe, and Kourtney) grew up. Robert and his wife Kris eventually divorced in 1991, but she and the girls remained in the public eye when Kris married Olympian Bruce Jenner. In 2003, Robert Kardashian died of cancer, which made it difficult for the family to want to be surrounded by the media; they just

wanted to grieve. It was Kim, however, who kept the family relevant when she began to hang around the “it girl” herself, Paris Hilton (Preston). This allowed for other socialites to quickly learn Kim’s name and eventually led to a relationship with rapper Ray-J, resulting in the famous sex tape that is the reason that Kim is the pop culture icon she is today. Soon after, the Kardashians started filming their new reality show *Keeping Up With the Kardashians*, which included the whole family, Kris and Bruce Jenner, Kim, Khloe, Kourtney, and the two sisters from the Jenner marriage, Kylie and Kendall (Preston). This show won countless awards, created multiple spinoffs like *Kourtney and Khloe Take Miami*, and has been so successful as to have been aired for seventeen seasons and counting. The show follows their daily lives and the lives of their best friends and significant others, as they travel, fight, deal with business, party, and live the life that everyone dreams of. However, this means that every little bit of their existence is in the spotlight; what follows is not always praise, but instead criticism and judgment, especially for someone like Kim and the way in which her fame began.

Whether in a magazine, through social media, or on television, Kim Kardashian seems to be everywhere these days. Many people love the Kardashians and see someone like Kim as hardworking and influential for young women and mothers. However, there are many who cannot seem to get over her past, no matter what good she may do. Kim began her journey through Freud’s dichotomy as a young girl living in the spotlight that surrounded her father. As her fame grew and she began to hang out with people like Brittany Spears and Paris Hilton, she remained in the virgin phase, since she was vulnerable to the world of media. Her transition into the whore phase came with the sex tape. Rather than let it negatively impact the rest of her life, she used that sex tape to cre-

ate an empire (Akawi). However, it seems to Kim and many others that she cannot escape the whore phase, even though she has become such a positive influence through her career and social media and as a mother. Kim, just like Beyoncé, is all about a positive body image and promoting self-love to all, but when she does so in regard to her own body, it is not promotion, but exploitation, and she receives a tremendous amount of hate (Akawi). In fact, after she posted a photo on Instagram with nothing but censor bars to hide her breasts, the hate comments seemed to roll in by the thousands. However, Kim took it as an opportunity to speak out about her confusion over how being proud of her body makes her a bad role model (Cassidy). She stated in the message, “It always seems to come back around to my sex tape that was made 13 YEARS AGO. 13 years and people still want to talk about it?! Let’s move on already, I have” (Cassidy). She goes on to talk about being empowered by her sexuality and her body, by showing her flaws, and that all she tries to do is empower other women all over the world in the same way. She ends the post with a message that practically mirrors that of Beyoncé’s message, saying, “I am a mother. I am a wife, sister, daughter, entrepreneur, and I am allowed to be sexy” (Cassidy). And after having four children, she definitely has that right.

Even before she became a mother to her four children with rap star Kanye West, Kim was already making the transition into the final stage of the dichotomy. She had grown from her past and was using her sexuality to instill confidence in other women through her social media, while also being a successful businesswoman. Kim donates to almost thirty different charities, openly speaks her mind about worldly issues, and believes in equal rights and opportunities for men and women. As she comments on the fact that she has “lived through

the embarrassment and fear of the sex tape and should not have proven she is more than something that happened more than a decade ago,” the vulnerability she once had as a virgin and whose has diminished (Cassidy). She now has found ways to manipulate social media to, in a sense, invite criticism that she then uses to grow her popularity and image. This was exemplified back in 2014 when she appeared on the cover of *Paper Magazine*, with her back to the camera, completely naked. She wore pearls and held a black dress to give the illusion of attending a fancy event; however, what catches the attention is Kim’s butt, fully oiled up and exposed (Gilbert). From this photo, Kim Kardashian “broke the internet,” showing off her body confidence on a whole new level. As a mother, she shared her struggles with her fertility and birth process, which prompted her to use surrogates for her last two children (Jones). Women may feel incomplete when they are not able to bear children, and likely, Freud would have called them a failure of their gender, since he believed women were only necessary for certain things like childbirth. However, the way that Kim remained so open about her own issues, mixed with her level of fame, allows women to feel comfortable in looking for alternative ways to conceive while still feeling strong in their bodies. Her journey mirrors the one of another famous celebrity who, despite not actually being a mother, has still made it through all three phases, albeit in a different manner.

Hannah Montana is a name that many children grew up hearing. Many grew up listening to her music and even dressed up as her for Halloween, much like a fairy tale princess. But she is not real. In fact, she is where Miley Cyrus began her journey with the dichotomy. Miley Cyrus was a Disney Channel star who made a TV show about living a double life as a pop star named “Hannah Montana.” Miley

Cyrus, much like Kim Kardashian, grew up in the spotlight, since her father Billy Ray Cyrus was a famous country singer. She scored the role in this show with Billy Ray right alongside her; it aired for about five years. This was the beginning of Miley's journey as the virgin; she was young, fresh, and vulnerable to the music and movie industries. The show was quite successful until Miley decided that being known as this perfect pop singer was not what she wanted for her music career. In an interview with *Elle Magazine*, she revealed that she knew she was done being Hannah Montana "when she had sex for the first time" (Rearick). She felt the transition from being young and a child to becoming a woman—transitioning into the whore phase. This is not because she had sex, but because she knew that she was growing and starting to figure out who she was, discovering her sexuality. Unfortunately, the media was unkind in their criticism of Miley's self-discovery.

In 2011, when the show ended, it was as if Miley's alter ego emerged and her image quickly switched to a "bad girl" with her album titled *Can't Be Tamed* (Marcus). From here, Miley quickly reinvented herself in the eyes of the media, shocking everyone. She ended her engagement, dyed and chopped her hair off into a blonde pixie cut, and went wild in terms of her actions and music (Nilles). The public will never forget Miley, half-naked, swinging on a wrecking ball in one of her music videos, explicitly dancing on singer Robin Thicke at the MTV Music Awards, and sticking her tongue out every chance she got (Marcus). She freely expressed her sexuality and showed off her frequent use of marijuana, because she had stopped caring what other people thought. This was her way of figuring out her life and career after being viewed as the "innocent pop star" that she started her career as. In another interview with *Elle Magazine*, she commented on her

actions, saying, “People have made me seem like a character so now I am just enjoying playing a character of myself” (Nilles). She was harshly criticized for this period of her life; many people wondered if she had gone insane or was purposely trying to be the biggest slut. But in reality, she was immersing herself in the whore phase of development by experimenting with her music, sexuality, and image – in front of the entire world. She even mentioned to *E News* that, “it is no wonder why people lose who they really are when they grow up the way I did because there are always people telling me who I am meant to be” (Nilles). However, her journey through this stage was not just for experimentation, because she continued to be an important influence on her fans.

Amid the craziness of her life, Miley still found a way to be a positive influence, which may not seem like something a so-called whore would be able to do. She started the Happy Hippie Foundation, which was dedicated to help fight the “injustice facing homeless youth, the LGBTQ youth, and other vulnerable populations” (Dzurillay). Miley was extremely open about her sexual identity and came out as pansexual, realizing that she never “really felt gay and never felt straight” (Dzurillay). Even though she was criticized for all of her sexually charged music and videos, she never cared, because she felt it was more important to be able to relate to her fans and be someone that they could look up to. This is where she began her transition into the final stage of motherhood, despite not actually being a mother. She finally began figuring out who she wanted to be, what kind of music she wanted to create, and how she wanted to continue being there for her fans. She began to clean up her social media and participated in what she called “social media blackouts,” where she would go inactive for a while to focus and draw some attention away from herself (Nilles).

Miley decided to get sober because she wanted to be “super clean and sharp, because I know exactly where I want to be now” (Baker). She even began changing her music back to a more homegrown type of sound, one that reflects what she has been through and brings about a sense of happiness for where she is now. One of the final acts of figuring out her life was reuniting with her ex-fiancé Liam Hemsworth, who many believe is the reason for her life changes, like the ones previously stated. However, this proves exactly the opposite of Miley’s transition into the final stage because it suggests, much like the fairy tale princesses, that the man saves the day every time (Baker). It seems that the media still does not want to give Miley the credit she deserves for figuring out what she wants because she acted in such a “horrifying” manner before reaching that realization. Many believe that Hemsworth “settled Miley down” and while that may be partly accurate, Miley does not attribute her success to having a man help her settle down. She recently told radio host Elvis Duran in an interview:

Yes, you can tell my new music has a leading man that helped bring my feet down to the ground, but those were the changes that I really made. And as a woman I always want to take back that power and say ‘Hey! I did that!’ I made the decision to say that is what I want (Baker).

This “damsel in distress” scenario is not fair to a woman who is simply trying to find her place in this society, because it suggests that being a woman is not enough. Miley has successfully journeyed through each stage, making mistakes and learning about herself, before reaching her final destination into motherhood, which as of now, means maturity.

RAPE CULTURE

The journey of self-discovery is not uncommon—in fact, it is a part of life—but many judge people’s manner of self-discovery based on their own ignorance. To some, men’s way of thinking is simply discriminatory and degrading to women, but many people do not think about how dangerous it actually is. Men who place women into a specific gender role with limited activities can become angered when they see women who do not follow their “obligations.” According to researcher H.S. Field, “individuals who thought women should be restricted to ‘traditional’ social roles also tended to believe that rape was often a woman’s fault and that it is motivated by a strong need for sexual release” (Field). When men are taught at a young age how they are supposed to act according to society (strong, powerful, and dominant) they tend to believe that women are supposed to act the opposite (submissive, weak, and obedient), just like Freud did. And this is where the danger lies: men begin to tolerate rape as being acceptable, and in turn, female rape victims think the assault was their fault (David and Schneider). Men claim that sexually independent women are “asking for it” when they do things outside the norms of their sex; this could be dressing proactively, entering the military, or being alone in the bar. In fact, one in three women who join the military “will be raped by one of their fellow soldiers” (Flowers). In the United States as a whole, one in six women is a victim of “attempted or completed rape,” compared to one in thirty-three men (rainn.org). These statistics are not caused by clothing or lifestyle choices, but by the ignorance of those who have grown up thinking that men and women cannot be equal in their sexuality. Unfortunately, society is no help when it comes to this negative view of the self, largely due to the technology available and the powerful existence of social media that allows for unnecessary pressure.

THE PRESSURE FROM SOCIAL MEDIA

When young teenage girls look at magazines with clothing or makeup advertisements, they often see a beautiful model with an extremely thin figure and flawless face. This form of media has long been criticized for creating unrealistic standards for beauty because these models are not real: they are Photoshopped and retouched, because even the most gorgeous models are not good enough. However, the world now has a new form of media, where it is much more difficult to judge whether someone's appearance and life are portrayed truthfully on their online platforms. What makes it even worse is that it is not simply models or celebrities who seem to be living a perfect life, as seen on their Instagram or Facebook: it is friends, classmates, and coworkers (Jacobson). Social media makes it easy for average people to craft an image that makes others feel as though they "have it all" and that their life is a dream. But those lives are not as perfect as they appear, and in the same manner as a Photoshopped model, they present unfeasible standards for their onlookers. Researchers at Stanford University investigated how this affects college students, inventing the term "duck syndrome" as a way to explain this problem (Jacobson). The phrase "refers to the way a duck appears to glide effortlessly across a pond while below the surface its feet work frantically to stay afloat" (Jacobson). This makes it harder for friends or family members of those "perfect" individuals to see that they need help.

Those who create a life that they hope others will envy (influencers) only cause more problems for themselves, often resulting in eating disorders and mental health issues. Unfortunately, those who envy influencers (followers) end up with the same problems because they feel that their lives are inadequate compared to the influencers' lives; this in turn creates immense pressure for followers to change their

lives. Even those who recognize that many of the influencers' lives are not as they appear still continue to like and follow their accounts, as if to say, "I approve" (Jacobson). This is how so many celebrities are able to grow their popularity at such a rapid pace; social media is essential to their success (Kavutha). Celebrities like Miley Cyrus or Kim Kardashian, whether they like it or not, are trendsetters. Social media has made it so that they must post what they are doing, who they are with, and what they are wearing (Kavuntha). People want to know these things because they want to feel validated in their daily life choices; if they see Miley drinking Starbucks, they have to do it too, because why question a celebrity? What many people do not realize is the fact that celebrities are often forced to post, regardless of their desire not to (Kavuntha). They also feel immense pressure to present their glamorous life in the correct way to satisfy their fans; not doing so risks heavy criticism. These are dangerous forms of validation, but it is how a society creates norms for people to live by, since sites like Facebook and Instagram are used to define what is acceptable and what is not ("Sexual Assault and the Media"). When this is the case, and society is so badly addicted to social media regardless of the harm it creates, the severity of important issues like rape or gender discrimination will only increase.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE

The fast-changing world of technology has had a much greater influence on different sectors of society than one might initially think. Besides being able to reinvent one's life, technology has made it much easier for different forms of social media to influence the way that a society thinks and acts. More gender-based discriminatory acts are committed be-

cause of the use of social media platforms. This is true even at the workplace (Haughton). More hiring managers use sites like Facebook or Twitter to take a closer look into their applicants, which is not a bad practice unless they use it in a negative manner. The University of the West of Scotland conducted a study on the role that social media plays for hiring managers and found that “managers who snoop on applicants’ profiles are more likely to enforce a certain bias against female candidates, particularly their physical appearance” (Haughton). There is a reason why most job applications do not require a photo, as it often allows for some form of discrimination (particularly age or gender), but with the access that social media provides, recruiters are able to get away with it. Women now have to realize that a degree might not be enough, because, according to the “61% of managers who admit to using social media to make hiring decisions,” one’s looks may be the difference between getting the job or not (Haughton). For this reason, women must be more aware of the photos they post online, while men can simply focus on liking or commenting on photos (Ramasubbu). As if real life did not create enough pressure, social media allows for seemingly random people to comment on or criticize another person’s life, to which they have no connection. It is not difficult to see where this goes very wrong, especially for women and especially in the context of rape culture.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND RAPE CULTURE

It is easy for people to provide their opinions and share information through social media platforms, not just to friends and family, but also to people all over the world. Access like this invite abuse, and for women, it seems especially harsh because of the constant pressure to post “sexy”, but not “slutty,” photos and to be “proud of their accomplishments,” but

not “cocky.” It has been proven that women use social media more than men, but the amount and severity of the harassment they receive is also much higher (Ramasubbu). Based solely on gender and appearance, women find themselves victims to a form of online bullying referred to as “slut-shaming” (Ramasubbu). The word *slut*, a dirty, nasty, and offensive word used to label women who are “loud and unclean, when they should be submissive and pure,” is used in a contradictory manner (Nelson). Women who find themselves wearing this label are not dirty or unclean; they are simply open about their sexuality. To society, and especially those on social media, this means they are “easy” or “a whore.” Confidence is taken to mean that the woman lacks self-respect, making the first move is mistaken for desperation, and having more than one partner is seen as pathetic (Nelson). People on social media who engage in slut shaming seem to forget that the “slut” in the photo is a real person who may now feel rejected in this society. Instagram and Twitter allow for this to be done in an extremely vicious manner, and slut shaming is a reflection of rape culture, where the woman is the one to blame. Women who act or dress in a provocative manner are told that “they deserve less respect than girls who aren’t and they did something that lead to them being raped” (Nelson). What makes this whole situation worse is the fact that social media invites negative commentary on the stories of rape that get reported. Men are able to publicly sympathize with the rapist, claiming that the woman “asked for it,” which in turn prevents any other women who have been sexually abused from coming forward and getting the help they need. All of this hurt exists because strong women—women who are confident in their skin or their lifestyle choices—are considered not to be acting in accordance with their gender role. Women are bullied online and in person for engaging in the journey that comes naturally for both genders.

CONCLUSION

It is possible that Freud, while flawed in his thinking, may have been right about one thing. There are roles for women (virgin, whore, and mother), but he was wrong to say that women must occupy just one role their whole lives and he was wrong to suggest that any of these roles are negative. In fact, these are not roles, but rather stages that women must go through, just as fairy tales princesses and modern celebrities do, in order to figure out who they want to be. Women are not meant to occupy a specific role just because history says so, and they certainly should not be made to feel less than for the decisions they make along the way. Words like *whore* and *slut* are used in demeaning ways, when in reality, being a whore is a natural and positive thing. A woman should not have to question her appearance for fear of being judged for showing too much skin; instead, all that says about her is that she is confident in her body. A woman should not be dissuaded from certain male-dominated occupations like the military, and men should not feel so threatened that they need to assert their power over women through sexually violent acts. Women should be able to use social media without being tormented by men who think their opinion holds any sway over someone else's life. Society is slowly learning to adapt to the idea that women can break away from the "rules" associated with their gender, thanks to celebrities like Beyoncé and Kim Kardashian. Actor and model Amber Rose, who has been slut-shamed for many years, has taken that word and given it a whole new meaning. Every year, she holds an event called a "Slutwalk" to help empower women who are victims of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and victim blaming. Those who have influence, like celebrities, are able to create a world where women do not have to be ashamed of their sexuality. On TV, Disney is also reshaping their storylines; the old Disney movies are classic, but flawed. They teach young girls the

wrong message—women need a man to be whole—but girls are capable of being whole on their own, through their own journey of self-discovery. The new Disney movies, like *Brave* or *Frozen*, embrace new ideas, including the importance of loving oneself, following one's own desires first, and the fact that being independent is okay, even for a woman. In order to change the previous way of life, one where women are forced into one role and punished for not following the rules, society must be aware of and listen to the changes around them. Movements like #MeToo and the Slutwalk continue to raise awareness of gender issues, and the media will continue to portray women the way they should be portrayed: with respect, with a voice, and as equals.

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Review of *The Lemonade Reader: Beyoncé, Black Feminism and Spirituality*

The Lemonade Reader: Beyoncé, Black Feminism and Spirituality. Edited by Kinitra D. Brooks and Kameelah L. Martin. Routledge, 2019. 260 pp. ISBN: 978-1138596788.

Beyoncé Knowles-Carter is a cultural phenomenon. Those who fail to use her lyrics, videos, and performances as texts miss an opportunity to take the pulse of American society. Since Beyoncé released her visual album, *Lemonade* (2016), many have found solace, inspiration, intellectual fodder, new language, healing, and a greater appreciation for the artist in her work. Outspokenly interdisciplinary and “proudly intergenerational,” *The Lemonade Reader* features contributions from professors, columnists, artists, cultural critics, independent writers, and many other essential voices (2). This wide range of perspectives provides a spectrum of indispensable approaches to *Lemonade*. Its three sections—“Some shit is just for us,” “Of her spiritual strivings,” and “The lady sings her legacy”—each contain approximately six essays dedicated to the themes of Black womanhood(s), spirituality, and performing artistry, respectively. “Interludes” are also dispersed throughout, which, although shorter than most of the essays, provide important context and insight for better understanding *Lemonade*. The authors intend for the *Reader* to be accessible “across disciplinary boundaries,” noting that readers “that prefer a lighter treatment are encouraged to read the Interludes [...] as they are shorter and lack academic jargon” (3). Thus, educators

will find that this collection is accessible for students and academics alike, as well as for anyone with an interest in Black feminism, popular culture, visual and performing artistry, Black Studies, or, of course, Queen Bey.

Together, these essays provide an accessible and expansive, though by no means exhaustive, resource for studying Beyoncé's culturally impactful *Lemonade*. Its commentary is a push and pull between admiring Bey's powerful images, lyrics, poetics, and aesthetics, and, at times, asking her to expand her politics' limitations, "refusing to shy away from the sharp edges and less-than-savory elements" of *Lemonade* (251). The contributors situate Beyoncé's work within historical, Afrodiasporic, and feminist conversations. Important themes include spirituality, folklore, Black southern life, grief and loss, the Black feminine divine, love, diaspora, beauty politics, folklore, community, musical legacies, histories of oppression, and the unique positionality of the artist herself.

In an "Interlude" before the first section, "Some shit is just for us," Maiysha Kai asks the important question: "What do we want from Beyoncé?" The editors' effort to frame the collection with this question in mind points to *The Lemonade Reader's* self-conscious undertaking. What *do* we want from Beyoncé? What do the contributors want from her? While this manifests in varying forms, all of the *Reader's* contributors situate their *want* "through a lens of love" (xxii). Indeed, Candice Benbow points out in the foreword that "not only does Bey read, but she was also raised on the same Black feminist sheroes that we were. It was not a fluke that, when watching *Lemonade*, we could see Zora, Maya, Toni, and June. The imprint of Black women creators and thinkers is as much on her as it is on us. They loved us all that much. It's that love that brings us to this *Lemonade Reader*" (xxi). Together, they read love in (present in) and onto (as a frame-

work) Beyoncé's *Lemonade*, orienting their criticism within a womanist tradition of feeling "love for other women ('loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually'), for humanity ('committed to survival and wholeness of entire people'), for the spiritual world ('Loves the moon. Loves the Spirit'), for celebration ('loves music. Loves dance Loves love and food and roundness'), and, most important, for her self."¹ In this way, the collection itself is an important act of love politics through a reorienting of conversations about Bey toward the "lens of love" she draws upon in her own art.

As an integral component of womanism, the personal and *the self* are continuously tied to love, and many of the writers articulate a sense of the personal while writing about *Lemonade*. For example, Ashleigh Shackelford shares her disappointment upon realizing that Bey's failure to represent Black fat girls means it "ain't made for" women like her: "The space I hold for [Beyoncé] is not conditional, but rather intentional. I love Bey. I love her cultural power and political growth. I also hope to see Black fat femmes like me in her work centered on Black femme rage and Black girl magic" (14). LaKisha M. Simmons provides a close reading of images pertaining to motherhood, loss, and reproduction in *Lemonade*, alongside a narrative of her own: "To tell my own story of blood and loss I have to start with the first miscarriage. It was an ordinary miscarriage, as miscarriages go. [...] It turns out that my uterus was shaped like a heart, and that can make getting (or staying) pregnant difficult" (51). After sharing her story, Simmons comes full circle: "The[se] facts say little about my inner world at the time. I cannot tell the story without dissembling. [...] What I can say is, 'But girl, I'm alright.' [...] I can only write about the statistics: black women living in my zip code at the time were

1 Jennifer Nash, quoting Alice Walker in "Practicing Love: Black Feminism, Love-Politics, and Post Intersectionality," 9.

more likely to have a baby premature and underweight than not" (52). Here, she weaves her own experiences with those of countless other Black women who are subject to increased reproductive risks because of systemic harm and "attempt to account for [that] grief and pain in autobiographical acts," placing Beyoncé's representation of these themes within this larger context (52).

One of the most exciting elements explored in this collection is Beyoncé's articulation of spirituality in *Lemonade*. Nicholas R. Jones traces the "majesty and grace of primordial female water *orishas*," arguing that "the presence of *odú* helps us to theorize a new way of interpreting how *Lemonade* articulates Beyoncé's African diasporic aesthetics and black feminist framework" (88-89). In a similar vein, Melanie C. Jones "locates Beyoncé's *Lemonade* as a sacred multilayered source for Black women and girls discovering and reclaiming the Black Feminine Divine in themselves, their mothers, daughters, and sisters" (98). She goes on to explore the ways that Beyoncé's "Goddess representation pays homage to multiple female deities of African religious traditions," and argues that the singer's "slay" rhetoric nods back to those female deities, "spin[ning] the expressions of anger, fury, and rage as powerful weaponry to self-protect and eradicate all manners of oppression" (100, 107). These examples barely scratch the surface of the scholarly work included in *The Lemonade Reader*. Anyone who ever doubted the critical consciousness at play in Queen Bey's artistry, who finds her "an odd topic of study," who absorbed bell hooks' negative review of *Lemonade* without another thought, will think twice after picking up *The Lemonade Reader*.

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Review of *Bright Signals: A History of Color Television*

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Bright Signals: A History of Color Television. Susan Murray. Durham University Press, 2018. 308 pages. 978-0-8223-7170-0, pp. v-308.

Susan Murray is a noted scholar of numerous aspects of American television culture and its impact on popular culture. In *Bright Signals: A History of Color Television*, she examines what she considers to be an understudied aspect of television history, the evolution of color television. Murray reckons that the often tumultuous transition of the emerging medium from black and white to color involves much more than technological advancements and artistic considerations. Indeed, for better or worse, it embodies wide-ranging changes in American cultural attitudes from the post-WWII era to the early days of the Vietnam War. Patriotism, consumerism, conformity, and counterculture each played their part in the eventual changeover, together with a mix of marketing and influence peddling heady enough to make a reader dizzy. Her scholarly mission is not to extoll any supposed innate supremacy of color over black and white. Instead, she wishes to understand the cultural shifts that led to the switch.

Bright Signals comprises six roughly chronological chapters. Each chapter ostensibly chronicles the innovations, frustrations, and machinations propelling television during particular years. Practically speaking, thoughtful insights and stimulating discussions recur so frequently that the chapters function as “story arcs” in a successful television series. Exciting and unexpected connections between television his-

tory, cinematic history, technology, morality, and geopolitics emerge at every turn. This study concerns not just the maturation of an entertainment medium. Rather, it details the transformation of our wider culture into something resembling what we know today.

In the opening “arc,” she expertly analyzes the earliest attempts at color television. False starts by such luminaries as Thomas Edison, George Westinghouse, and Nikola Tesla are given much stimulating discussion. Likewise, the fact that their failures are more widely known than the successes of numerous lesser-known individuals in the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union are discussed in terms of the concept of “celebrity,” both then and now. The brief heyday of mechanical color television is brilliantly analyzed, although that analysis is more technical than the average reader might like.

The unifying “plot line” of *Bright Signals* is color itself. The development, standardization, distribution, and adoption of color, not just in television, but in every aspect of post-war popular culture, provide this book its reason for being. Technical challenges in the process of colorizing television, which the motion picture industry never encountered, are expertly framed against the backdrop of a nation hungry for vibrancy following the dark days of World War II. The notion that black and white television “embodied” what we think of as “the greatest generation,” while color “heralded the arrival” of their baby boomer children receives much thoughtful discussion. Complicated discourse about what sorts of programming would work best in color, as opposed to black and white, are expertly unpacked for the reader’s benefit. The use of color in travel documentaries promoting American culture to the rest of the world and vice versa is thoughtfully discussed. Likewise, early color “extravaganzas,”

such as live performances of beloved classics like “Cinderella” and highly touted sporting events, are thoughtfully analyzed in terms of what adding, or taking away, an element like color can do in terms of storytelling and popular perception.

The transition of existing television “infrastructure” to accommodate color forms the main “subplot” of the book. The fight to establish standards for color broadcasting and production receives extraordinary analysis. Although this analysis is, again, much more technical than the average reader might expect, it comes in small enough doses as to be understandable. The means, both fair and foul, that the major networks, and their corporate partners, CBS and Zenith or NBC and RCA, attempted to sway the FCC toward standards that favored them, which is thoughtfully examined. Likewise, the much less effective efforts of the then-fledgling ABC and the now nearly forgotten DuMont network are analyzed in terms of changing consumer tastes and values throughout the era, including the notion of “survival of the fittest” and all that that entails. Industry heavyweights, like Walt Disney, make their will known on virtually every page.

Those interested in television, electronic media, and storytelling will find *Bright Signals: A History of Color Television* a pleasure to read. Those interested in the power of marketing to shape popular attitudes, and, thereby, governmental policy will also find the book deeply engrossing.

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Contributors

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James Altman serves as an Accessibility Resources Support Technologist for the Accessibility Resources Team (ART), Office of Accessibility Resources (OAR) at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Prior to joining the ART, he served a year as an Academic Support Specialist for the Academic Success Center (ASC) at UNLV, and spent a number of highly successful years teaching in the UNLV English Department. His research interests include Modern and Contemporary Literature, Modern and Contemporary Poetry, Popular Culture, and how best to implement assistive technologies to aid student learning. He has published both scholarly and creative work.

Alexis Noel Brooks is a graduate student in English at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and works for the UNLV Honors College as a writing consultant. Her primary research interest is Black women's literature and theory. She has recently been interested in the works of J. California Cooper and conversations about fictionality surrounding Hannah Crafts' *The Bondwoman's Narrative*. Prior to UNLV, she received her Bachelors in English and Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies at Southern Oregon University.

Raluca D. Comanelea completed her MA in Literature in the Department of English at UNLV. She worked as research assistant to the Director of Composition Program and has taught a variety of introductory English composition courses on campus. Raluca's present focus is Tennessee Williams's vast repertoire of plays and short stories. She is also a creative writer, and currently working on a novella, *Desire and Cemeteries*, as well as a compilation of short stories about the com-

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Danielle Meijer, M.S., is an instructor of philosophy at DePaul University and the founder and artistic director of Aleph World Fusion Dance, a company specializing in the

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Tracy Reilly teaches intellectual property courses at the University of Dayton School of Law, where she also directs its pioneering Program in Law & Technology. Her research interests focus within the cross-sections of copyright and trademark law with philosophy, literature, psychology, religion, and heavy metal music.

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H. Peter Steeves is Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Humanities Center at DePaul University where he specializes in phenomenology, ethics, and philosophy of science. Steeves is the author of eight books and more than 130 book chapters and journal articles. His current research focuses primarily on cosmology and astrobiology—on the origin events of both the cosmos and life.

Briana Whiteside is an assistant professor of English at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Her research interests include science fiction, popular culture, natural hair, and black women's narratives. She is particularly interested in the ways in which black women have endeavored to heal from physical and psychological traumas, as well as in how African American literature by women has represented this struggle. Her work also explores the ways in which notions of imprisonment have shaped understandings of the prison system—an interest resulting from her experience teaching within both medium- and maximum-security prisons. As evidence of her commitment to fostering intellectual growth within the prison classroom, she created a library within a maximum-security prison in Alabama.

