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Egg

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Managing Editor

Alison Langdon

Editorial Board

Jane Fife, Gillian Knoll, Kelly Reames, and Trini Stickle

Cover Design

Kaley Miller

Submission guidelines: *The Ashen Egg* is an annual journal publishing essays on literature, rhetoric, linguistics, film, and popular culture. Any current Western Kentucky University under-graduate student may submit work for consideration. Submissions must be endorsed by an English Department faculty member who confirms the submission as a piece produced for one of the faculty member's courses and approves it as worthy for publication. Manuscripts may range from 750 to 3000 words, though exceptions may be made for submissions of stellar quality. Literature, film, and pop culture essays must follow the Modern Language Association style guidelines as defined in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (latest edition); essays on linguistics or professional writing topics may use APA (latest edition). Submissions must be received in CH 135 no later than November 1 and must be accompanied by the cover sheet and endorsement form to be considered.

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Contents
Vol. 7 (2019)

NOTE ON CONTRIBUTORS

LEARNING STYLES: A MAJOR EDUCATIONAL MISPERCEPTION <i>Ann-Meguiar Bouldin</i>	1
SPIRITUALITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT: LEARNING FROM <i>THE PEOPLE OF THE WHALE</i> <i>Thomas Deaton</i>	10
HEAVENLY FATHERS: EXAMINING THE FATHER FIGURE IN TRACY K. SMITH'S "MY GOD, IT'S FULL OF STARS" <i>Cameron Fontes</i>	19
CASTING SHADOWS: "DARK" AND "LIGHT" LADIES IN <i>PASSING</i> <i>Rachel McCoy</i>	27
ROMANCE OF THE PROSE (SORT OF) <i>Dillon Miller</i>	32
HOMER'S TALE OF TOXIC MASCULINITY <i>Samantha Newman</i>	42
"BURN BUT HIS BOOKS": EDUCATION AND COLONIZATION IN <i>THE TEMPEST</i> AND <i>ANNIE JOHN</i> <i>Granite Pare</i>	52
<i>A PARCHMENT OF LEAVES</i> AND THE VALUE OF INTIMACY WITH NATURE <i>Chance Peterson</i>	59
<i>PATHER PANCHALI</i> V. POPULAR CINEMA: A THEMATIC AND TECHNICAL ANALYSIS <i>Savannah Rogers</i>	66
LANGUAGE USE IN CHILDREN'S ANIMATED FILMS AND <i>ALADDIN</i> <i>Adrianna Waters</i>	74

NOTE ON CONTRIBUTORS

Ann-Meguiar Bouldin hails from Russellville, Kentucky and has come to the Hill to study Secondary English Education. She is passionate about language and literature but is especially excited to be in a classroom building relationships with future students. In Bowling Green, she helps teach an ESL class at her church and leads a community group for WKU's Christian Student Fellowship. Whether in the classroom or out in the community, Ann-Meguiar hopes to make an impact through education and learning.

Thomas Deaton is a senior English major (professional writing concentration) with a minor in environmental studies & sustainability. He is a member of the Mahurin Honors College, a recipient of the Cherry Presidential Scholarship, and a Semester at Sea alum. Originally from Elizabethtown, Kentucky, Thomas came to WKU in the fall of 2015 following strong family ties and an appreciation for the University's inherent focus on the international. This fall, he will begin graduate studies in public affairs in Washington, D.C.

Cameron Fontes is a second-year Honors student double majoring in French and English with a Creative Writing concentration and a minor in Film Studies. Outside of class, he is currently helping to reestablish C.O.R.E., a service organization on campus geared towards working with elderly people in the community. He would like to thank Dr. Ted Hovet for endorsing his work for publication and assisting in the revision process, Ms. Kathleen Holland, his eighth grade English teacher, for sparking his love of writing, and especially his father for inspiring him to write this piece.

Rachel McCoy will be graduating this spring with degrees in English Literature and Mathematics. In the fall, she plans to continue her studies by pursuing a master's degree in English Literature. Rachel is from Independence, Kentucky and is a fourth-degree black belt in Taekwondo. Her hobbies include kicking people in the head, reading insatiably, and drinking too much coffee. She has previously presented "Casting Shadows" at the Spring 2019 Kentucky Honors Roundtable Conference and would like to thank Dr. Reames for her help with editing this paper and her recommendation.

Dillon Miller is a junior English major with a concentration in professional writing and a minor in entrepreneurship. When he is not in class or studying, Dillon enjoys playing the bass guitar (usually along with a Rush or Led Zeppelin song), admiring the beautiful sound of one of his many records, indulging in the meditative glow of the great outdoors, or appreciating the fine taste of single malt scotch, bourbon, and cigars. Dillon insists that beagle hounds are the best type of dog, and his evidence for this claim is his best friend back home, his dog Snoopy.

Samantha Newman is a senior at Western Kentucky University majoring in English Literature with a minor in Creative Writing. Her research interests include gender and queer representation in literature. Her work has been published in the 2018 edition of *Zephyrus*, Western Kentucky University's fine arts magazine. Her favorite novel is *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistlestop Cafe* by Fannie Flagg and her favorite Shakespeare play is *Hamlet*. Her favorite life accomplishment is visiting Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London.

Granite Pare, a 19-year-old sophomore from Alvaton, Kentucky, is in the WKU Mahurin Honors College with a major in Biology, a minor in Biophysics, and a pre-med concentration. He is a member of Alpha Epsilon Delta and Global Brigades where he serves as a medications chair. He also works as a TA in the physics department. In his free time, Granite enjoys disc golfing, traveling, and spending time with friends and family. After graduation, Granite hopes to attend medical school and pursue a career in emergency medicine.

LEARNING STYLES:
A MAJOR EDUCATIONAL MISCONCEPTION

by Ann-Meguiar Bouldin

The true beauty of a classroom is reflected by the colorfully diverse students that comprise it, each individual unique in talent, ability, and skill. Perched in the desks sit tomorrow's architects and engineers, doctors and lawyers, social workers and chefs. But for today, they are simply students. What makes each student so different from the next? It is the remarkable workings inside the student mind that fashions them into distinct and unique individuals. In the last twenty-five years, neuroscientific research has changed what is known about the brain at a breathtaking rate, and these discoveries have been highly influential upon educational research and have aided in the development of new and improved methods of teaching. Every day, advancements in brain research challenges and changes what is known about student learning. As a result, it is crucial that educators understand which educational theories are still supported by credible, up-to-date information so that they can teach in the most effective way. Unfortunately, some teachers are complacent teaching out-of-date educational concepts that are no longer supported by research. One that is particularly prominent in the classroom today is the Visual-Auditory-Kinesthetic Learning Style (VAK) Theory. While neither neuroscientific research nor educational research continue to support this theory, teachers are still following its principles. Belief in this theory of learning styles is a common

misconception held by teachers and students in the modern classroom. It is a fallacy that hinders student learning and should be replaced with more effective educational theory that is backed by the latest findings of neuroscience.

As research will show, the VAK Learning Style theory is an educational misconception claiming that students learn best in one particular style or fashion. VAK theorists classify students into three style categories: visual learners, auditory learners, and kinesthetic learners. Under this canon of belief, visual students learn most efficiently when information is presented in graphs, charts, maps, diagrams, or other images. Auditory learners gain knowledge through listening and depend on the spoken word. Kinesthetic learners retain information when they are provided with concrete examples and materials that they can touch or manipulate (Riener & Willingham, 2010). In his article, "One Giant Step Backward: Myths of Black Cultural Learning Styles," Craig Frisby comments that learning styles "reflect individual differences in how information and experience is organized and processed" (Frisby, 1993). Following this statement, Frisby claims that "these characteristic modes of processing information are manifestations of deeper personality characteristics that develop slowly and are not easily modified by training" (Frisby, 1993). Frisby's comments reflect the most problematic beliefs of the VAK theory: that learning styles are unchangeable pieces of students' personalities that determine how they are able to gain knowledge.

Educational theory disputed by the latest advances in brain research, as the VAK theory is, becomes a problem for today's education system. Classrooms should be environments for the presentation of facts and truths, not obsolete information. A most unfortunate fact regarding the VAK theory is the number of teachers and educators who believe it to be true and are presenting it as fact within their classrooms. Steve Masson, director of the Laboratory for Research in Neuroeducation, states that "the most prevalent

neuromyth in education is the idea that students have different learning styles” (Masson & Sarrasin, 2015). Through a research study he published in *Education Canada*, Masson and graduate student Jérémie Blanchette Sarrasin flesh out the popularity of the learning style myth. Data collected from teachers in the United Kingdom, Netherlands, Turkey, Greece, and China is displayed in a chart. Under each country name a listed percentage represents the proportion of teachers who believe the Learning Style Theory to be true. The numbers are staggering, with 93% prevalence in the United Kingdom, 96% prevalence in the Netherlands and Greece, and 97% prevalence in Turkey and China (Masson & Sarrasin, 2015). These numbers reflect the weight the VAK theory packs in modern education and the overwhelming influence it has on so many of today’s educators. Students are being taught that they are only able learn in one style, and this also impacts them by limiting their opportunities to learn.

How can such a widely accepted theory be deemed a myth? Recent neuroscientific discoveries about the human brain stand in stark controversy to the VAK theory. Paul Eggen and Donald Kauchak are the authors of the educational psychology textbook, *Windows on Classrooms*. Throughout this collection of educational theory, Eggen and Kauchak describe the phenomenon of neuroplasticity. Neuroplasticity is the “brain’s ability to reorganize itself by forming new neural connections in response to learning or experience” (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016). In short, humans can literally change their brains. Dr. Lara Boyd is the Canada Research Chair in Neurobiology of Motor Learning and a neuroscientist at the University of British Columbia. In her study of stroke victims, she has seen the physical act of neuroplasticity take place in her patients. Her research, along with numerous other credible studies, has led to the discovery of the three functions of neuroplasticity: chemical change, structural change, and functional change (Boyd, 2015).

When an individual learns a brand new skill, chemical change takes place in the brain. Chemical signals are transferred between brain cells through neurons that trigger reactions. Dr. Boyd reports that the brain “increases the concentration” of these reaction as the individual takes in more information and gains more knowledge (2015). Since these changes happen so rapidly, chemical changes directly correspond with the short-term memory (Boyd, 2015). This first function of neuroplasticity is all about making small improvements in a skill or taking a jab at new content.

Throughout learning, the brain can change the connections between neurons and make adjustments to its physical form. In addition, the brain can “integrate various networks and regions to function together” (Boyd, 2015). This constitutes the second behavior of neuroplasticity: structural change. Since these tangible adjustments take more time to occur, they directly relate to a person’s long-term memory (Boyd, 2015). This second function is all about true learning, making knowledge stick, and embedding understanding into memory.

As an individual uses a specific brain region over and over again, it becomes “easier to excite” (Boyd, 2015). This means the mind keeps this area ready to use, conveniently placing it on standby for quick access. Students who learn and practice a variety of skills activate multiple regions within their mind. As a result, the brain begins to shift “how and when these areas are triggered” (Boyd, 2015). This third function of neuroplasticity, functional change, allows the human mind to think “smarter.”

Neuroscientific discoveries like Dr. Lara Boyd’s and the rigorously tested research discussed in *Windows on Classrooms* prove the learning style theory is no longer a leading educational practice. The human brain does not possess certain “characteristic modes of processing information” that are unchangeable manifestations of “personality,” as Learning Style theorists like Craig Frisby claim (Frisby, 1993). Instead, the human mind has the extraordinary

capability to be neuroplastic, to refine itself. The take-away for educators? Students are in control of their own learning.

With a falsity like the Learning Style Theory prevailing in today's education system, students are bound to be affected. As the majority of educators cling to this flawed conjecture, students are suffering a number of educational injustices. Students are told they can only achieve their full academic potential when information is presented within their preferred learning style. As a result, thinking is being confined, self-efficacy and motivation within school systems is diminishing, and students are unprepared for life beyond the classroom.

Many teachers who believe the premise of learning styles actually administer VAK assessments to determine the learning styles present in their classrooms. Students get immediate feedback on how they learn "best." However, according to Paul Kirschner, "there is no real scientific basis for the propositions [in this] realm of beliefs" (Kirschner, 2017). This is one detrimental effect of the VAK theory. The students within these learning environments are taught to confine their learning to one system, visual or auditory or kinesthetic. In an article entitled "Defending or Debunking 'Myths' of Learning Styles," Peter DeWitt concludes that "it is harmful if we box students into one way of learning because that creates a one-size-fits-all mentality" (2014). Education is all about creative and critical thinking. Those things will not take place in students' minds as long as they are hindered by the VAK theory.

"I'm a visual learner, so I already know I'm not going to do well in Dr. Bailey's lecture class." "What's the point in trying to get an A in this online class? I need to hear the information to retain it." "There's nothing hands-on or experimental about math. I'm just trying to survive Mrs. Orndorff's class to the end of the semester." The previous quotations are all typical of students influenced by the VAK Learning Style myth. Anyone who has had the opportunity to sit in a classroom will have experienced complaints such as these. It

is obvious that these students have little confidence in their abilities to achieve success, and as long as the information is not presented in the way they prefer, students remain unmotivated to push themselves. These are the mindsets that students are gaining as modern education pushes learning styles. Cedar Riener and Daniel Willingham provide great example of these self-efficacy and motivation issues:

This [learning style] belief has the potential to shape and constrain the experience that students have in the college classroom. For example, if a student believes she is a visual learner and therefore disengages and daydreams when a lecturer turns off the PowerPoint and tells a story, this will prevent her from learning the concept through a compelling narrative. (Riener & Willingham, 2010)

Keeping students motivated and confident in their own learning abilities are some of the most challenging obstacles teachers have to overcome throughout their career. What these teachers do not realize is that they are working against themselves when they influence students to believe in learning styles. Educators are giving students a free pass to tune into only the parts of the lesson they are “capable” of learning from. This practice is exceedingly counterproductive.

Another principle of education that the VAK theory undermines is the goal of preparing students for life beyond the classroom. College and career readiness, interview etiquette, soft skills, and many other “real world” principles are emphasized in the classroom. Teachers make an extra effort to incorporate word problems and real-life application questions into their assessments (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016). All of these practices encourage students to transfer their academic knowledge and apply it to other situations. However, learning styles contradict this. Life is full of unpredictability. Individuals will experience an array of struggles presented in a variety of forms. As Peter DeWitt emphasizes,

“offering different ways of learning is really helpful to students because they need to take in information in a variety of ways” (Defending or Debunking, 2015). Students must be familiar with thinking creatively and critically in order to solve a number of different problems they may face throughout their life beyond the classroom.

Since the VAK Learning Style theory fails, what can teachers rely on to reach their ultimate teaching goals? Does there exist a set of educational theory that can withstand rigorous testing and prove credible? Paul Eggen and Donald Kauchak explore a number of theories that intertwine and support one another in their educational psychology textbook, *Windows on Classrooms*. Theories such as Constructivism, Behaviorism, Cognitive Learning Theory, and Social Cognitive Theory are all built upon the principles of neuroscience. They theorize that learners construct their own knowledge, that consequences influence student behavior, that students’ memories can be manipulated, and that social interaction promotes learning, respectively (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016). Each of these ideologies align with the research behind neuroplasticity and learners’ abilities to chemically, structurally, and functionally change their own brains. Eggen and Kauchak advise that teachers mix these styles of learning and instruction in their own classrooms to teach content in a variety of ways. Presenting information in so many forms is completely contradictory to the VAK theory.

In addition to their roots in neuroscientific findings, each of these theories is supported by teaching standards set by the state. In Kentucky, the Education Professional Standards Board sets criterion for successful classrooms. Standard 8 in section 2 of the Kentucky Teacher Standards states, “The teacher shall understand and use a variety of instructional strategies to encourage learners to develop deep understanding of content areas and their connections and to build skills to apply knowledge in meaningful ways” (Division of Educator Preparation, 2018). This corresponds directly with what

Eggen and Kauchak teach in their textbook. Students will achieve greater academic success when a plethora of instructional learning methods are implemented into their education systems. This is what educators can rely on to reach their ultimate teaching goals. However, not everyone is on board. Teachers who choose to ignore the authenticity and validity of these credible theories by settling for the inconsistency and inaccuracy of the VAK myth are choosing to hinder student success. They are choosing to impede learning.

Ultimately, the VAK Learning Style Theory has surfaced as a major educational myth. Its inability to align with recent neuroscientific discoveries and research proves that it is unfit for the modern classroom. Its widespread popularity in education systems around the world show how rampant the idea is, and the harsh reality is that students are suffering under the influence of the VAK theory. They are unmotivated, lacking in self-confidence, and unprepared for life beyond school walls. Rather than being shut off to new forms of learning, students can embrace a myriad of learning opportunities if they were only taught to do so. Teachers who stay up-to-date with educational and neuroscientific research know that better educational theories are available for them to put into practice, and it is vital that educators recognize these alternatives so that they may implement a variety of them into their classrooms. The result will be a learning environment full of flourishing students, all diverse and individual in the way they think. This will allow the true beauty of the classroom to be revealed and restored again.

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SPIRITUALITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT:
LEARNING FROM *PEOPLE OF THE WHALE*

by *Thomas Deaton*

Ecocriticism as a literary genre seems to find its origins in the 20th century, when the advent of the modern environmental movement took shape and out of which came the likes of *Silent Spring* and *A Sand County Almanac*. As public concern over the sustainability and livelihood of the natural world grew (and continues to grow), these two works emerged as the bibles of the ecocritical movement, which is defined by an ASLE-cited (the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment) work as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (Oppermann 1). While this is certainly a broad intersection, it creates an open door for the inclusion of potentially environmental texts that heavily engage in more fictional accounts of this relationship. One specific example lies in the many noticeable engagements with environmental themes that emerge from the Native American tradition. Interesting, too, is the emphasis these works place on the religious traditions of the Native American community—and the timeliness of such arguments in the larger American whole. While many modern ecocritical texts engage in a dialogue with religion (in the spirit of E. O. Wilson’s “Letter to a Southern Baptist Pastor”), it is of particular interest and importance to both the ecocritical genre and the larger environmental movement to note the connections between spirituality and environment in these texts, too. One work

in this tradition, Linda Hogan's *People of the Whale*, makes reverent and worshipful references to the environment through anthropocentric natural imagery and the motif of spiritual creation, helping to spur discussion on the source of humanity's power over nature through characterization and setting, thus providing an important contribution to the genre and timely discourse on the natural world.

Since the first encounter between European colonialists and Native Americans, there has been an almost stereotypically-large amount of outsider attention paid to the environmentally-connected spirituality of Native American culture. Dave Aftandilian emphasizes this in his piece on learning from Native American environmentalism:

Seeing Native Americans as “nature peoples” has a long history in North America. From nearly the first moment that Europeans set foot on the continent, they described the native peoples they encountered in one of two ways: either as noble savages, living in peace and uncivilized harmony with nature, and possessing a deep ecological wisdom, or as savage, bloodthirsty, unfeeling killers, living the brutal, harsh existence of nature “red in tooth and claw.” (220)

Aftandilian also details how the second of those two descriptions was somehow lost over time. It only takes watching a clip of Disney's *Pocahontas*, however, to see the former of these descriptions alive and well. But this is not only an external fascination; literary texts emerging from within Native American culture exhibit deep spiritual connections to place, as presented in the narrative of *People of the Whale*. It makes much sense, based on this argument, to notice great care in environmental description by authors of this tradition, including Linda Hogan.

Hogan's novel embodies this deep ecological wisdom and discussion of the world as part of a divine system as a statement on the interconnectedness of humanity. *People of the Whale* begins with

an allegory on the migration of an octopus from the sea to a nearby cave. What could generally be observed as a normal natural event is instead observed by all members of the community as a mystical and important one:

[T]he octopus walked out of the sea and they watched it. Every one of these ocean people stood back, amazed to see it walk, the eye of it looking at them, each one seen, as if each one were known in all their past, all their future. . . . [O]ne of the powerful women stepped up. She believed it had a purpose for going into the cave and that the humans, a small group of lives beside a big ocean, should leave it alone. Others agreed. Its purpose was a mystery. (15-16)

The focus in this selection on the all-knowingness of the community's new resident begins the novel with the motif of the parallels between humans and nature. The moment is special because the natural world has crossed into the human, and it must be left as so, for its purpose is unknown and must not be disturbed. This lengthier passage does much to communicate a natural reverence and 'within-ness' of humans in nature, and it cements the piece as a work of Native American ecocritical literature from the beginning. As Ian Marshall writes, ecocriticism allows authors and philosophers the potential for moving "freely around the web" of life, encompassing study in both the natural and social sciences and the arts and humanities (2). Following this theme, is Hogan's writing here not mixing these disciplines as she gives spiritual and artistic expression to the biological patterns of nature (i.e. the octopus)? Arguably so.

This is a common theme among other modern ecocritical pieces, too. Kentucky author Wendell Berry speaks much on his personal bridges between faith and the land, perhaps culminated in Berry's book, *Sex, Economy, Freedom, and Community*. One such essay is Berry's "Christianity and The Survival of Creation," in which Berry attempts to understand the Bible as a nature book, highlighting the holiness

in both the world *and* its people. “We will discover that the Creation is not in any sense independent of the Creator, the result of a primal creative act long over and done with,” Berry writes, “but is the continuous, constant participation of all creatures in the being of God.” Connections between pieces like this that cut across social and cultural subsections of America present the continuity of divinity among nature, and digressing, an inquiry as to the modern disconnect between environmentalism and the Church.

A review of Robert N. Watson’s *Back to Nature: The Green and the Real in the Late Renaissance* points out the polemic nature of the ecocritical label. To quote Watson directly: “Is ecocriticism the latest resort of identity politics in the academy, a way for those excluded by the usual categories to claim victim status ... by identifying with an oppressed biosphere?” (Woodbridge 291). Such a harsh understanding of ecocriticism (which, as Woodbridge points out, is more or less true) is perhaps to blame for the wedge driven between the pulpit and the environmental movement as a whole at some point in the last three to four centuries. Yet observe the people of Hogan’s work and their ability to bridge anthropology and a reverence for creation. In the Christian tradition, the Psalms detail a similar question: “The earth *is* the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. (2) For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods. (3) Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?” (Psalm 24:1-3). Such scriptures make no qualms about the divine connectedness of humanity and nature as one creation, but this still leaves the source of the modern divide between pastor and protestor missing.

Vin Nardizzi, in a piece published in *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies*, may have an idea about this argument’s origins. Having synthesized works that present the possibility of an eco-Chaucer and, later, an eco-Shakespeare, Nardizzi recognizes the long-term effects of the concepts studied in the works on which she

is writing, and cites Lynn White Jr.'s "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis." This essay, which makes great and wide statements on the religious nature of said ecological crisis, attempts to find out where this entire debate started:

In the days of the scratch-plow, fields were distributed generally in units capable of supporting a single family. Subsistence farming was the presupposition. But no peasant owned eight oxen: to use the new and more efficient plow, peasants pooled their oxen to form large plow-teams. . . . Thus, distribution of land was based no longer on the needs of a family but, rather, on the capacity of a power machine to till the earth. Man's relation to the soil was profoundly changed. Formerly man had been part of nature; now he was the exploiter of nature. (White 1205)

With technology, White finds, comes a sudden shift in mentality, though it may not be one entirely original to the advent of the power machine. Even Hogan's characters of the people in "white dwellings" (the cultural traditionalists) must negotiate modern conveniences with their traditional ways of life, though this is not their focus:

They need their propane stoves on cold days, their umbrellas on the warm days, but even though they are great thinkers, they believe in, live in, the world of matter. The Great Something lives in matter, the trees with their mysterious fluid, their force, the green fuse of light, the orange with its inner crystals, the stones and their great and small beginnings. (198)

Despite this, the "power of humans over nature" interpretation of the Bible leads to Christianity as one of the most "anthropocentric religion[s] the world has ever seen," which from its genesis gave nature no other purpose than to be at the human's every will (White 1205). But having seen such reverent stories of the coexistence of

humans and nature woven into Hogan's work as an inherently spiritual and eco-centric stance on humankind, one is left to wonder how such far divided cultures can co-exist—and potentially teach the other a lesson.

Hogan's novel at length details the divisive atmosphere of a community torn between protecting heritage and adapting to the exercise of control over natural resources, particularly for economic gain. Thomas, one of the novel's principal characters, struggles with this as someone reclaiming culture over the final chapters of the work. As he attempts to readjust to his home culture after spending years in Vietnam post-war, a major part of his restoration is also a restoration of his relationship with the environment, a newfound learning to patch his missing environmental spirituality. At night, he blindly trusts the sea, "goes down to the pier on the docks," and "turns his back and drops himself into the water of the Pacific, of Peace" (158). Thomas' characterization over the course of the novel is one of healing, yes, but also one of allowing the environment to reclaim him. The environment is the story's driving force, whether the sea water is too warm or a drought is coming (125).

This great social critique out of the novel via Hogan's "character" of the environment is an important one, though not unfamiliar to ecocriticism. Rachel Carson's *The Sea Around Us*, interestingly enough, embodies this character of "mother sea" as the 'all being' of creation (7). This work mixes the spiritual and the physical in an interesting coming-together of science and a concept of higher power. Carson begins with similar parental, human pronouns in her descriptions of the environment, with descriptions of "our planet's birth" and its "parent sun" (2). Most closely connected to Hogan's piece is the following excerpt, a particularly striking story that mirrors Thomas's restorative character development:

Eventually man, too, found his way back to the sea.
Standing on its shores, he must have looked but upon it with

wonder and curiosity, compounded with an unconscious recognition of his lineage. He could not physically re-enter the ocean as the seals and whales had done. But over the centuries, with all the skill and ingenuity and reasoning powers of his mind, he has sought to explore and investigate even its most remote parts, so that he might re-enter it mentally and imaginatively. (8)

Carson's approach to the progression of nature's processes and systems as that of humankind's true heritage is perhaps the solution to the dramatic trifecta of debate between exploitation, conservation, and reverence.

Ecocritical motifs can, more or less, exist in almost any writing that engages in active descriptions of the environment or—even better—social interactions with that environment. Hogan's *People of the Whale* seems to do both. By using such potent and physical connections between the human form and that of the greater environment, it can certainly be argued Hogan's embodiment of environmental healing in the Native American tradition helps mend the problematic gap over environmental care in America, a character-driven analysis of the structure of the greater Earth system. She fulfills the idea, too, by engaging in this discourse in a particularly spiritual text, going beyond simple geographic survey or philosophical description to an interesting coming-together of the spiritual and the (perceived) secular. What makes this such an interesting and unexpected concept is its timeliness; many works have been dedicated to the argument over spirituality's role (particularly Christianity's role) in and responsibility for environmental degradation versus conservation in this modern literary age, and to see such an argument in this work emerge from the Native American tradition is an important puzzle piece in understanding such a discussion's origins and inherent groundwork in the native (and arguably superior) cultures of the same lands. The social politics of religion and piety certainly manifest themselves in

many environmental works of the culture in question (not excluding Hogan), but what *People of the Whale* touches on is how involved this Greater Being truly is in the handing-over of Earth's natural phenomena and whether or not such an argument for humanity's Biblical equality to nature can be made.

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HEAVENLY FATHERS:

EXAMINING THE FATHER FIGURE IN TRACY K. SMITH'S "MY GOD, IT'S FULL OF STARS"

by Cameron Fontes

When I first read Tracy K. Smith's masterful poem "My God, It's Full of Stars," I was most struck by the breadth of its scope. The text is essentially a mini-saga of the mystery of the universe: an epic poem in five parts on a model scale, referencing everything from aerospace engineering and astronomical mythology to science fiction in film and the lost city of Atlantis. What catches my attention now, though, a couple years out from having read the poem for the first time, is the archetype of the father figure that appears in each section of the text. Throughout the poem, Smith draws upon her relationship with her own father, an engineer who worked on the Hubble space telescope, to inform her exploration of humanity's place in the universe in relation to our culture and relationships. In doing so, she effectively harkens back to a specific moment in American politics and provides an avenue by which I can examine my own relationship to spirituality and my father.

In the poem's first section, Smith creates tension between contrasting examples of parental figures by juxtaposing the characterization of space as "A cosmic mother watching through a spray of stars" to that of a "father [who] storms through adjacent rooms / Ranting with the force of Kingdom Come,/Not caring anymore what might snap us in its jaw." These conflicting images first introduce the reader to the idea of a father figure in the poem as someone who does not have an active role in the interaction

between the far reaches of the universe and humans on Earth. He does not place himself in the intermediary space between Earth and the cosmos, he only stalks with exasperated anger “through adjacent rooms.” Similarly, in the second section of the poem, Smith introduces the character of Charlton Heston, one of the most stereotypically masculine icons in 20th century American culture. He is characterized as being a “Hero, survivor, God’s righthand man,” who remarks with nostalgia, “*For all I know, I was the last true man on this earth.*” Here again, the father figure is a detached non-participant in his environment. Instead of conversing with the poem’s speaker, with whom the reader assumes he intended to speak upon arriving at their home at the beginning of the section, Heston insists on rambling at length about his own past fantasies of the future and how they have been shattered by the present reality.

Both of these characterizations are then turned on their head by the poem’s third section, in which Smith transitions into a more abstract treatise on the nature of time and man’s place in the universe. At the end of this section she writes that she wants to be

Wide open, so everything floods in at once.
 And sealed tight, so nothing escapes. Not even time,
 Which should curl in on itself and loop around like smoke.
 So that I might be sitting now beside my father
 As he raises a lit match to the bowl of his pipe
 For the first time in the winter of 1959.

The father figure introduced in the last three lines of section three is a complete foil to that of Heston in the previous section: rather than a man obsessed with his own nostalgia for the past, here we see a man whose daughter (the speaker, now the poet) longs for him earnestly, wishing that time would not escape her so she can revisit the memories of her childhood.

Literary reviewers also make note of Smith’s use of the cosmos as an allegory for her parental relationship and her efficacy in doing so. Of *Life on Mars*, the Pulitzer Prize-winning collection in which this poem was originally published, Joel Brouwer of *The New York Times* remarks, “in her elegies mourning his death, outer space serves both as a metaphor for the unknowable zone into which her father has vanished and as a way of expressing the hope that his existence

hasn't ceased, merely changed." This dual purpose of space both as a reflection of the beyond in which Smith's father now resides and as a lens through which to view his death not as an occasion of finality but simply as a shift in being is evident in these first three sections of the poem. In sections one and two, Smith explores the cosmos as a heavenly home for god-like beings, whether in the form of giants stomping among the stars and "ranting with the force of Kingdom Come" or of old Hollywood stars in manufactured renderings of the outer limits who were projected like gods onto theatre screens. In section three, Smith begins to reimagine if she can change the nature of time, "Which should curl in on itself and loop around like smoke," and space themselves (or perhaps just her perception of them) in order to be with her father again. In this way, her exploration of space allows her father's death to be not so much an ending as an opportunity to reenact their relationship in his new state of being.

In the fourth section of the poem, Smith utilizes an allusion to a hallowed piece of American popular culture, specifically of American film, to present the reader with a familiar character whose journey is emblematic of her father's. She does this by transporting the reader to the set of Stanley Kubrick's 1968 science-fiction masterpiece *2001: A Space Odyssey*. She describes the film's protagonist, Dave, hurtling "Above Jupiter's vast canyons and seas, / Over the lava strewn plains and mountains / Packed in ice." This vivid illustration of the end of the film might at first seem an odd image to include among broad explorations of the nature of the universe. However, if one considers Brouwer's interpretation of Smith's outer space as a metaphor through which she tries to understand and reconnect to her father, one can begin to see how viewing Dave as a stand-in for Smith's father reveals the meaning behind this portion of the poem.

As previously mentioned with her broader use of space as a metaphor, literary critics view Smith's use of allusion to and integration of science fiction as a valuable supplement to her examination of her paternal relationship. Troy Jollimore of *The Washington Post* writes that in *Life on Mars*, Smith makes "use of images from science and science fiction to articulate human desire and grief." Pair this statement with Smith's own explanation that

[my] interest in science fiction was really based in what now seems like a very kitschy futuristic aesthetic: an image of the future from about forty years ago. So I went back to films like Stanley Kubrick's 2001... [and watched] Charlton Heston in *Omega Man* or in *Soylent Green* or even in the *Planet of the Apes* films.... All of it just gave me a different kind of language for thinking about these questions.

In other words, just as Smith uses outer space as a metaphor through which she can understand and cope with her father's death, she also uses the medium of science fiction cinema to understand the same and similar themes. In describing the aforementioned scene in this section of the poem, Smith asks, "Who knows what blazes through his mind? / Is it still his life he moves through, or does/That end at the end of what he can name?" It is easy to imagine Smith asking this about her own father as his spirit flew through space after his death. She wonders what he thought of in those final moments and ponders what to call the space through which he moves after his departure from Earth.

In drawing from a very specific brand of science fiction nostalgia in latter-twentieth century American cinema, Smith also builds upon a uniquely American tradition of evoking the past through depictions of the future. Thomas Leitch, in his article on Hollywood nostalgia, quotes Fredric Jameson as explaining that films such as those mentioned above and others, such as *Star Wars*, don't recreate the past literally as a period piece would but, "rather, by reinventing the feel and shape of characteristic art objects of an older period...seek to reawaken a sense of the past associated with those objects." This aligns with Smith's own explanation for why she turned to these specific films for inspiration. Besides helping her understand the complicated concepts of astronomy and other studies of the universe, these films help Smith to reflect upon her own past and the specific moment in American culture in which her past resides. The "great gleaming set" of *2001* that she describes is like her childhood, in that both are icons of glistening visions of the future rooted in the past. Kubrick's set reflects the sojourn of mankind into the future while using stylistic elements and aesthetics from the revolutionary 1960s, while Smith's memory of her youth illustrates

her yearning to be reunited with her father if only for one fleeting moment.

Leitch also gives an example of a more recent work that, like Smith's poem, "is filled with allusions to other films and avatars of pop culture,": Denis Villeneuve's 2017 film *Blade Runner 2049*. As in "My God, It's Full of Stars," Leitch notes that *Blade Runner 2049* makes reference (both visually and thematically) to multiple other works of science fiction including *Alien* (1979), *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), and Ridley Scott's original *Blade Runner* (1982). The film also alludes to much more recent works such as Christopher Nolan's *Inception* (2010) and Spike Jonze's *Her* (2013) in its depiction of totems and the relationship between humans and artificial intelligence, respectively. The film even has its own father figure in Harrison Ford's Rick Deckard, who plays a paternal role to Ryan Gosling's protagonist "K." Villeneuve's decision to cast Ford in the sequel to Scott's 1982 film (in which he was the protagonist) as the same character emphasizes how Ford occupies a similar place in the 21st century American pop culture pantheon as Charlton Heston did towards the end of the 20th century. Like Heston, Ford exists in the collective consciousness of modern Americans as a masculine icon of American film from his performances in movies such as *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Star Wars*, and *Blade Runner*. As evidenced in these examples, both "My God, It's Full of Stars" and *Blade Runner 2049* draw from various pieces of the cultures in which they were conceived and from their own personal histories to depict narratives centered around the themes of paternity and man's place in the universe.

In further examining the cultural context in which Smith's poem takes place, it is imperative to consider the impact of the political atmosphere at the time of her childhood when her father was working on the Hubble telescope. The Hubble Space Telescope was launched from space shuttle *Discovery* in 1990 soon after the end of the Reagan administration, during which the idea of the "traditional American family" made a massive resurgence in political discourse that was then reflected in the many arenas of pop culture, including in film ("About the Hubble Space Telescope"). In his article on the evolution of the American family in film from the 1960s to the 1980s, Emanuel Levy remarks that in the films of the Reagan era,

“stronger emphasis is placed on group structures (marriage and family) and traditional values (domesticity), reflecting the...era’s ‘upbeat’ philosophy.” He includes *Fatal Attraction* (1987) and *Rain Man* (1988) as examples of films that reinforce the idea of traditional family bonds as stable and positive in comparison to the liberal values of the 1960s and 1970s such as sexual liberation, the independence of the modern working woman, and individualism. This lies in stark contrast to the progressive optimism of the films of the 1970s that Smith mentions, whose visions of the future rest upon discovering new frontiers “Across the wide-screen of unparcelled time” and evolving from the ways of the past. While Smith may use these films to help her come to terms with the urge she feels to revisit her childhood, the films from the 1980s reveal the version of America in which her childhood actually occurs.

This environment is the setting of the fifth and last section of the poem, the most human and down to earth section. In it, Smith paints the picture of her father working on the Hubble space telescope in “the Reagan years,” an active participant in a technological phenomenon in a decade filled with countless other phenomena, whether cultural, political, or something else entirely. If not aware already, this passage confirms to the reader that Smith is basing this poem off her own paternal relationship. While many literary theorists prefer to interpret a work apart from the experiences of the author, in this case I find that approach incomplete, as it is one of these experiences upon which rests the entire premise of the poem.

I am also inclined to include the author’s experience with her father in my interpretation of her poem because it resonates heavily with my relationship with my father. Our relationship is not overwhelmingly dismal, but it also is not perfect, and one of our main points of constant disagreement is religion. My father adheres to a very strict interpretation of biblical texts, while I’m much more of a loose constructionist. I often wonder if my father’s penchant for structure in this subject comes from his own troubled relationships with both his biological father, with whom he is not close, and his stepfather, who raised him. Like Smith, I find it helps me to understand my father better when I step outside of myself and into something much bigger, like nature or outer space.

It is not always easy to be close to our fathers, either because we're separated by the great divide between this world and the next or because it seems like we're ideologically worlds away from each other. But as Smith posits, we can often discover the most about our connections to each other by considering realms which upon first glance seem distant and oblique but which after further reflection illuminate truths that can only be discovered in the exploration of the cognitive cosmology of the human consciousness.

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CASTING SHADOWS:
DARK AND LIGHT LADIES IN *PASSING*

by Rachel McCoy

The dichotomy of “dark” and “light” ladies has long been a part of literature; examples can be found in everything from the Bible to Shakespeare. The “light” lady is traditionally portrayed as virginal and pure, a perfect, epitomized version of her culture. Conversely, a “dark” lady is one who takes risks and exists outside of a culture’s accepted feminine space. A woman’s sexuality is often a key portion of her identity as either a “light” or “dark” lady: a “light” lady is in a traditional relationship or situation and exhibits little or no sexual desire, while a “dark” lady embraces her sexuality and often flaunts it. In her novel, *Passing*, Nella Larsen presents two women, Clare and Irene, who seem prepared to take part in this longstanding tradition, but Larsen ultimately uses their relationship to question this dichotomy. Using an unreliable narrator and female desire to deconstruct the dichotomy between “dark” and “light” ladies, Larsen criticizes the oppressive and estranging nature of dividing women between “dark” and “light.” Women’s attempts to be “light” ladies, and their failure to do so, create an oppressive, mercenary society, in which women will call others “dark” ladies to appear superior and “lighter.” Irene’s continual efforts to cast Clare as her opposing “dark” lady is exemplary of this because she continually cites Clare’s choice to pass as white but also frequently passes herself.

In Irene and Clare's initial encounter, Irene attempts to establish a dichotomy between the two, but fails to do so effectively because of her hypocrisy. Their encounter takes place at a white only hotel where Irene does not immediately recognize Clare. The shift in Irene's opinion of the woman once she recognizes Clare reveals her bias towards Clare. Irene describes the unknown woman's smile as "an odd sort of smile ... [and] she would have classed it, coming from another woman, as being just a shade too provocative for a waiter. About this one, however, there was something that made her hesitate to name it that. A certain impression of assurance, perhaps" (177). By beginning not with how she actually perceives the woman's smile, but how she normally would, Irene is predisposing the reader to think badly of other women while Irene looks virtuous for her more favorable opinion. The need to clarify her opinion also establishes Irene as an unreliable narrator, specifically as one who will change the narrative to place herself in the best light. Once Irene has recognized Clare, and that she is "passing," the phrase "impression of assurance" becomes a significant, subtle indicator that Clare gains confidence from "passing, while Irene is nervous about the possibility of being identified.

The connection of confidence to a dangerous act is the first step Irene takes in casting Clare as a "dark" lady. Irene's previous prevaricating about her opinion of the woman is now made worse by her recognition of Clare and she is now "sure that [Clare's smile] was too provocative for a waiter" (180). Despite the increased similarity in their situations, Irene is further distancing herself from Clare morally and condemning Clare as sexually deviant – another trait of the "dark" lady. An important distinction that helps to explain why their mutual "passing" does not endear Clare to Irene is made by Rafael Walker, who argues that for Irene there is a difference between "loyalty to race and loyalty to the *principle* of race" (180). Walker's distinction stems from Irene's need for racial stability; in this scene, Clare is threatening Irene's racial stability since she can only see how Clare's presence endangers her. Irene is unable

to see the similarities she shares with Clare because she does not recognize these traits in herself, which is most evident when Irene attempts to condemn Clare for “passing” while Irene is also “passing.” Irene’s attempts to portray Clare as a “dark” lady for behaviors that she herself is committing demonstrates her unreliability as a narrator as well as the internal and external damage the “light” lady persona causes.

Irene’s inability to distance herself from Clare stems from her attraction to her, but because Irene is fixated on being a perfect “light” lady, Irene cannot even contemplate her illicit desire and instead further demeans Clare. Despite intending to end all contact between them upon their next encounter, when Clare arrives to discuss an upcoming party, Irene is once again drawn in by Clare, because, as Deborah McDowell states, she “is both the embodiment and the object of the sexual feelings that Irene banishes” (377). Irene wishes to be like Clare, a free, empowered “dark” lady, but she also wishes to be with her, in a meaningful and equal relationship. However, Irene is not able to articulate this; on seeing Clare again, she describes herself as having a “sudden and inexplicable onrush of affectionate feeling” (225). Irene mentally presents herself as passive when confronted with her “affectionate feeling” – which has romantic connotations – as a defense mechanism to keep her “abnormal” emotions from overwhelming her and destabilizing her idealized life as a “light” lady. As they continue to discuss the upcoming party, Irene is further torn on her opinion of Clare, thinking that “in spite of [Clare’s] determined selfishness the woman before her was yet capable of heights and depths of feelings that she, Irene Redfield, had never known” (226). Because Irene is subconsciously coveting these actions forbidden to a “light” lady, she must devalue these actions by casting Clare’s behavior as negative; specifically, she focuses on how Clare’s “determined selfishness” has the potential to destroy Irene’s stable life as a “light” lady. Clare has chosen the path to make herself as happy and content

as possible, and foregone caring about her reputation – the opposite of Irene’s choice – so Irene chooses to vilify her without acknowledging that some of Clare’s choices are much healthier than hers.

Irene does come to understand her jealousy enough to recast it in a socially acceptable light by deciding that Clare and Brian are having an affair. There is very little basis for this conclusion, yet Irene vehemently convinces herself and the reader of the affair, demonstrating the power of heteronormativity and Irene’s unreliability as a narrator. Cheryl Wall argues that Irene values “her marriage, not out of any deep love for her husband Brian, but because it is her source of security and permanence” (108). Irene’s heteronormative marriage internally protects her from her own desire and externally fulfills the sexually normative component of the “light” lady characterization, thus supporting her decision to remain in her marriage: “True, she had left off trying to believe that he and Clare loved and yet did not love, but she still intended to hold fast to the outer shell of her marriage, to keep her life fixed, certain” (268). Interestingly, Irene is absolutely convinced of what Brian and Clare are doing, yet she cannot even think the word “affair.” Irene’s attempts to withhold emotional weight from Clare and Brian’s affair, in addition to Irene’s intense feelings towards Clare, could indicate that Irene wants Clare’s affections for herself. But this is a socially taboo desire so Irene cannot face this possibility, and instead pretends that her desire for the affair to not be emotional stems from an attempt to preserve what she can of her marriage. Evidence supporting Irene’s repressed feelings includes her continual association with Clare in spite of Irene’s repeated assertions that she wants nothing to do with her. Additionally, if the affair were to be purely physical then Irene’s dedication to her marriage vows and portrayal of Clare as the sexually deviant “dark” lady are less damaged. Irene is so obsessed with how others perceive her that she is willing to destroy the reputation of a fellow woman and allow her

marriage vows to be defiled all to continue to appear as the “light” lady.

Irene is determined to be a “light” lady so she must rewrite the narrative to remove her desire for Clare and instead vilify her. These actions cast doubt onto the integrity of Clare and Irene’s characters, forcing the reader to question the purpose of introducing the dichotomy. It is within this space that Larsen criticizes concept of “light” and “dark” ladies, because without them Irene and Clare could have reformed a strong and mutually beneficial friendship, but instead Irene isolates herself and pushes Clare away. Possibly even out the window.

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ROMANCE OF THE PROSE (SORT OF)

by Dillon Miller

In his earlier poetry, including *The Book of the Duchess* and *The House of Fame*, Chaucer was influenced and inspired by both his contemporaries and predecessors, particularly writers of romance from France and Italy. It makes sense, therefore, that one would find influences from the romantic mode of writing in Chaucer's works. In fact, upon first glance, it is easy to label several of Chaucer's pieces as romances themselves. When examining the structure, setting, plot, characters, and various other literary techniques of these earlier works, however, this comparison falls somewhat flat; while Chaucer may have romantic influences underneath the text, what he is actually doing with the text separates his works from merely romance. Both *The Book of the Duchess* and *The House of Fame* incorporate elements from romance, but their settings, characters, and themes make neither of them purely romance. Chaucer injects a bit of "English realism" into these works by modifying common elements of romance. His tweaking of existing conventions is what solidifies his place in history as a literary pioneer and a frontrunner of realism, titles he holds even by today's standards.

The Book of the Duchess features several characteristics of French, allegorical dream-poems, but, unlike typical romances, the poem itself is not an allegory. French dream-poems were a primary influence on Chaucer, especially in his earlier works. The *Roman de la Rose*, which Chaucer translated into English, set the standard for the

properties of many dream-poems to come. *The Book of the Duchess* is no exception. In Chaucer's *Romaunt of the Rose*, the scene opens with a description of the setting in which the dreamer finds himself:

Ben in May for the sonne brighte
 So glade that they shewe in syngyng
 That in her hertis is sich lykynge
 That they mote syngen and be light.
 Than doth the nyghtyngale hir myght
 To make noyse and syngen blythe
 Than is blissful many sithe. (Chaucer, RR 74-80)

Here the narrator is introduced into his dream by the bright light of a May morning and the blissful songs of birds. Chaucer drew inspiration directly from the *Roman de la Rose* for *The Book of the Duchess*, which is evident by his use of the same setting:

Me thoghte thus: that hyt was May,
 And in the dawenyng I lay...
 With smal foules a gret hep
 That had affrayed me out of my slep
 Thorgh noyse and swetnesse of her song. (Chaucer, BD 291-97)

The similarity here is unmistakable; the May morning and the blissful bird-songs are directly borrowed from the *Roman de la Rose*.

Where Chaucer deviates from traditional, romantic dream-poems in *The Book of the Duchess* is in resisting allegory in the encounter between the narrator and the Man in Black. French dream-poems often had one of two aims: "Either the poet himself was instructed in a dream by the god of love or some personified abstraction, or else a debatable case of love-casuistry led to an exposition of the rules of courtly love" (Clemen 25). *The Book of the Duchess*, however features neither of these purposes. One thing that many of Chaucer's stories have in common is that "there is no final shelter behind the world of doctrine" (Lawlor 645). Usually, these

romance poems would end with a culmination or exultation of courtly love, an ideal that was upheld as sacred doctrine during Chaucer's time. Scholars know that *The Book of the Duchess* was written as an elegy for the Duchess of Blanche, the wife of John of Gaunt. In the dream-poem, therefore, it is reasonable to infer that the narrator is Chaucer and the Man in Black is John of Gaunt. Instead of being an allegorical poem, *The Book of the Duchess* is a tale of an actual meeting between two real people. Despite the influences Chaucer drew from French dream-poems for *The Book of the Duchess*, he deviates from the traditional, allegorical properties of romantic poetry in order to create a novel story of consolation. The lack of doctrinal salvation and the push towards realism is a theme that continue to appear through Chaucer's career.

The House of Fame similarly draws inspiration from romantic dream-vision poetry in the form of the eagle guide, but, as he did in *The Book of the Duchess*, Chaucer twists a traditional allegorical characteristic into a more realistic one. Many classical tales involve a protagonist embarking on a quest or supernatural journey, often with limited-to-no understanding of what is going on around them. It is at this point that, usually, "[a]n authority figure appears within the dream to serve as the dreamer's guide, usually rendering in the form of didactic speech the message otherwise conveyed to the dreamer by way of visual imagery" (Marti 180). This common feature of romantic poetry is most easily seen in Dante's *La Divina Commedia*, most potently in the form of Virgil. Chaucer draws upon this tradition in *The House of Fame* through the arrival of Geffrey's eagle-guide:

This egle, of which I have yow told,
 That shon with fethres as of gold,
 Which that so hye gam to sore...
 Withyn hys sharpe nayles longe,
 Me, fleyng, in a swap he hente,
 And with hys sours ayen up wente,

Me caryinge in his clawes starke
 As lightly as I were a larke (Chaucer, *HF* 529-46)

Ovid, Virgil, and Dante used similar eagles as figures of authority in their works; Therefore, one might fully expect for the eagle in *The House of Fame* to then swoop up Geoffrey in his talons, explain to him the mystery of the things surrounding them, and chauffer him to a heavenly sanctuary where the dream's allegorical message would be further revealed. What the reader actually receives, however, is quite the contrary. Chaucer drifts more towards realism in the interaction between Geoffrey and the eagle, with the great bird remarking that Geoffrey is difficult to carry due to his weight: "Seynte Marye, / Thou art noyous for to carye! / And nothing nedeth it, pardee" (*HF* 573-75). The eagle also provides Geoffrey with a longwinded explanation of the logic behind the House of Fame's existence:

"For hyt
 Were impossible, to my wit,
 Though that Fame had alle the pies
 In al a realme, and alle the spies,
 How that yet she shulde here al this" (*HF* 701-05)

Traditional romance does not include this sort of comedic, blunt banter; realism can and does.

Chaucer deviates from the norm here, "for the great bird is no medieval, allegorical figure, but a satiric, three-dimensional portrait of a human being long familiar to every one of us: the pedantic lecturer, ever desirous of over-instructing a captive audience" (Bowden 1510). While drawing on the traditional authority figure or "guide" character of romantic poetry, the eagle parts from the stereotypical guide character, injecting a sort of English realism into the story. Chaucer also changes the tone of the story here. The eagle's humorous remarks about Geoffrey's weight and the longwinded, logical ramble would not have struck readers in Chaucer's day as being appropriately romantic or ideal. The eagle in

The House of Fame serves as another example of how Chaucer drew from traditional romantic conventions and added a twist, separating the tale from merely romance and pushing it towards realism.

One common thread between most, if not all, medieval romances is the focus on the process and virtues of *fin amour*, or courtly love. *The Book of the Duchess* follows the conventions of *fin amour* closely, but the disparity between the narrator and the Man in Black in courtly knowledge and attitudes presents the reader with a criticism of *fin amour* standards. Chaucer is catering to something familiar to his audience, namely *fin amour*, while also implying that these standards do not reflect the central theme of the poem. In fact, this disparity enhances the consoling theme of the poem. The narrator makes several interruptions during the Man in Black's account of love throughout the course of the poem. The first of these interruptions demonstrates the narrator's lack of understanding of *fin amour*: "Hardely, your love was wel beset; / I not how ye myghte have do bet" (BD 1043-44). The narrator is then informed of his own understatement by the Man in Black, to whom the narrator then apologizes. This is not an attack on the values of *fin amour*; the narrator is merely unaware that brazen devotion is expected of a chivalric man. Later in the poem, however, the narrator switches from simple misunderstanding of courtly principles to unabashed criticism of them. When addressing the physical toll that grief is taking on the Man in Black, the narrator recalls the folly of past romantic suicides:

Ye sholde be dampned in this cas
 By as good right as Medea was,
 That slough hir children for Jasoun;
 And Phyllis also Demophoun
 Heng himself—so weylaway!—
 For he had broke his terme-day
 To come to hir. Another rage
 Had Dydo, the queen eke of Cartage,

That slough hirself for Eneas
 Was fals—which a fool she was!
 And Ecquo died for Narcisus
 Nolde nat love hir, and rygth thus
 Hath many another foly doon (*BD* 725-37)

This thorough and particularly extensive remark shows the essential opposition that the narrator holds to the conventions of *fin amour*. It is possible that the narrator is behaving in an aggressive manner towards the Man in Black, but his previous remarks more convincingly demonstrate that he is simply unaware of the value of abandoned grief to the Man in Black and ignorant to the fact that the knight would be deeply dishonored if he wasn't in that state.

It may be easy to assume that the narrator's role in the poem is nonessential or insensitive due to his lack of understanding of what was, at the time, common knowledge and social protocol, but the case is quite the contrary: "By representing the values and outlook of a more prosaic reality, he throws into relief the romantic ideals of the dream-world to which he is briefly admitted; and brings courtly tradition into contact with the incongruous figures and attitudes of practical affairs, where the dream is tested against waking truth" (Winny 75). The poem is, after all, a consolation for John of Gaunt. It only seems appropriate then for Chaucer to challenge the ideals that were causing him such grief. At the same time, however, Chaucer never fully rejects the conventions of *fin amour*, retaining the respect for John of Gaunt's emotional state and simultaneously offering sympathy for his plight. Upon first glance, the narrator, and Chaucer by extension, is critical of courtly love in *The Book of the Duchess*, but behind the criticisms and deviations from traditional romantic format lay the essence of the poem's purpose of consolation and its role in abolishing the finality of doctrine.

The Book of the Duchess clearly has similarities with traditional love-vision poems, but its other characteristics set it apart from

simply being a romance. The same can be said of *The House of Fame*. While Chaucer does draw inspiration from traditional notions of love-vision poetry, the poem's setting and central theme prevent it from being classified as a romance. One of the first characteristics of the poem to immediately suggest that it is not a romance is the poem's setting. In the invocation of Book I, Geoffrey states that

[n]e no man elles me befor,
 Mette, I trowe stedfastly,
 So wonderful a drem as I
 The tenthe day now of Decembre,
 The which, as I kan now remember,
 I wol yow tellen everydel. (*BD* 60-65)

As is evident by both the *Roman de la Rose* and *The Book of the Duchess*, love-visions usually take place in spring, particularly on a May morning. This dream does not just take place in December, however. Taking into account the differences in dates between the Julian and Gregorian calendars, the tenth of December in Chaucer's time would have fallen within a few days of the winter solstice, the longest night of the year. So, in the exposition of *The House of Fame*, "Geoffrey, in his overanxiety to appear proficient in the French code, happens upon the date of all dates least poetically suggestive of love and spring time" (Bevington 292).

Chaucer does, however, include bits of information and draws upon various sources to suggest that the poem's theme is, in fact, love. Geoffrey "[h]ast served so ententyfly / Hys blynde newew Cupido, / And faire Venus also" (616-18), confirming that Geoffrey is a love-poet. Additionally, in the poem *Dit de la Panthere d'Amours* by Nicole de Margival, "the God of Love directs the dreamer to a house of Fortune, where he hopes to further his love suit" (Minnis 183). The narrator's situation in *The House of Fame* is quite similar; Geoffrey is taken to the House of Fame by an eagle, where he will be further educated on the workings of Fame. Despite these aspects that signal the poem's message being centered on love, it is simply

not the case. It has already been discussed that love-visions usually tend to culminate in the dreamer meeting the God of Love or some other personified abstraction. From there, the virtues and conventions of courtly love are then further illuminated. Also, the setting of these poems tends to be in the palace of the God of Love or somewhere similar.

The House of Fame does not possess any of these features. There is no encounter with a personification of Love but rather with one of Fame. The palace-structure also belongs to Fame instead of Love. The people residing in and visiting the House of Fame are not allegorical personifications either; they are real people. Finally, despite the dreamer being a servant of Love, courtly love is never discussed within Fame's residence. The poem's main focus is on the dreamer's servitude and his education; therefore, despite all of its romantic properties:

[i]n the *House of Fame*, Chaucer eschews the whole *allegoresis* of love which forms the most obvious feature of the French "love-visions," and with it the usual exhaustive didactic analysis of the subject. Instead, there is more emphasis on himself and his work as a poet—a theme rarely touched upon by the French. (Clemen 69)

It is obvious that *The House of Fame* draws inspiration from the romantic love-visions that preceded it, but Chaucer employs different techniques and narrative structures in order to separate it from the romantic mode and move it towards realism. Again, there is no culmination of doctrine, but rather a glimpse into the impartiality and randomness of reality represented by Fame. Here again, doctrine, in this case *fine amour*, does not provide a final shelter for the reader.

It is evident that Chaucer looked to romances of the past during the formation of *The Book of the Duchess* and *The House of Fame*. Each poem contains elements of romance in their respective settings,

themes, characters, and structure. It is easy to glaze the surface of these poems and determine that they are romances, but a deeper analysis shows that Chaucer took these conventions of romance and expanded upon them in order to create two innovative pieces of work. Neither *The Book of the Duchess* nor *The House of Fame* are purely romance. While Chaucer's literature may seem irrelevant and antiquated to many people today, these two poems demonstrate that this is not so. Chaucer took existing conventions, expanded upon them, shifted them around, and creatively used them to his advantage in order to create two pieces that were both fresh and familiar to the readers of his day, and the same holds true even by today's standards. Literary writers up through the centuries have done the same, but Chaucer was one of the first—a pioneer, so to speak. He molded what was familiar to his audience into the beginnings of a new genre: realism. The subversion of courtly love, the blunt humor, and the difference in theme present in both poems suggest that Chaucer was a frontrunner into the realm of realistic writing. A pioneer may be one of the first to cultivate an idea, but everyone must start with a foundation. Literature is no different. Through studying and analyzing *The Book of the Duchess* and *The House of Fame*, readers can get a glimpse at what made Chaucer—and what makes literature in general—so lasting and influential: the power of innovation.

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HOMER'S TALE OF TOXIC MASCULINITY

by *Samantha Newman*

The Odyssey is known for bold adventures, terrifying creatures, and Odysseus, one of the most beloved literary heroes. For many, he is fearless, strong, and everything a male hero is supposed to be. Seemingly more capable than any man could be, Odysseus is elevated from the realm of humans, demonstrating the idea presented by Kevin Boon that “heroes, [...] like Gods, are above the terrene enterprises of common men” (301). There is an otherworldly presence in his bravery and heroic actions. An initial reading of *The Odyssey* supports this, as Odysseus is revered by all and is endlessly brave through the trials he faces. A more critical exploration of the text reveals there is a danger in not questioning his actions and their subsequent consequences. Odysseus acts, often with violence, without careful consideration, and though this behavior is not necessarily dangerous—a willingness to defend oneself can be the difference between life and death—it is reminiscent of the traits attributed to toxic masculinity: violence, the need to assert dominance, and the devaluing of women and sex to maintain power. While the danger of Odysseus’s journey requires him to hold a number of masculine traits, the overabundance of them, especially in regards to his need to be a brave and heroic leader, becomes a hindrance rather than a help as he constantly demonstrates his dominance through violence.

It is as important to be critical of figures like Odysseus as it is important to be critical of terms and ideas like masculinity. Though

a number of things affect masculinity and make it nearly impossible to define in a clear and specific way, it is typically understood in one of two ways in regards to social context. The first views traits to be rooted in “the actual differences between men and women, and primarily analyzes the personality” (Thompson 575). The normative approach considers masculinity to be “a socially constructed gender script and examines the ideologies and institutions involved in maintaining different masculinity standards” (Thompson 576). Though the two disagree on the origin of masculinity, they agree that the masculinity has an impact on men socially as it alters their personality and will manifest itself into their actions. With these definitions in mind, masculine traits can be understood as “a synthesis of the multiple roles men perform” (Thompson 578) and become obvious in prominent hero figures like Hercules, who must perform the twelve labors to prove himself, and Orpheus who descends into Hades to save his wife from death. The men who are understood to be the best heroes of literature often serve multiple roles like husbands, war leaders, or demigods that demonstrate the complexities of masculinity as they either mesh or cannot do so. Odysseus himself is a warrior and a husband who is expected to conquer others and prove he is superior as he faces others in battle. He is the definition of a hero, spending ten years facing trials to return home to his country and wife, and as such becomes worthy of worship, imitation, and praise as he faces what seems to be never-ending trials and tribulations without giving up. His masculinity is best seen in his constant need to survive, which is an understood need for humans regardless of their particular situation, and as Odysseus continues to overcome adversity, he becomes a symbol of success. The more Odysseus succeeds, the easier it is to understand him as someone worthy of attention and imitation because he continues to prove his value and becomes an instruction manual of sorts for those wishing to overcome hardships the way he has.

But to view Odysseus and his fellow heroes as holding the guidelines for becoming a strong and masculine figure is to deny the crucial fact that it is impossible to become them. It should be remembered that the masculine hero is “a hyperbole of those masculine characteristics” (Boon 307) because his purpose is to exist outside the constraints of humanity and defy the natural fear of mortality. The hero is not overly masculine because he wants to be; he is overly masculine because he has to be. Odysseus shows no ill will or malicious intent with his actions. Instead, he performs his role as a hero to meet the expectations he and others have of him and what he should do and be. His heroism is elevated through *kleos*, a Greek idea that “esteem depends on how one is viewed and talked of by one's peers” (Segal 22) and is the significant factor in the way a person will view themselves. In *The Odyssey*, his fame allows others to feel a sense of comfort and security thanks to his impressive resume of bravery. The reader of his text is even able to understand the feeling of safety he offers, though they must think more critically about how and why they are feeling it.

In terms of a modern reader, it is important to note that a number of aspects of masculinity have been internalized by men who are expected to act as such and women who expect the men they know to continue to act as expected. Though the desire for security is not dangerous on its own, once it is achieved through extreme violence, an unhealthy showing of dominance, and an obvious lack of concern for morality and responsibility, masculinity becomes toxic. Similarly, a reader should be able to recognize that in small amounts, traits of masculinity are acceptable, but once they start becoming dangerous for the exhibitor of them or the people around them, something should be changed. This is evident when the masculine person is unable to understand that their actions are unacceptable and begin to act on their impulses in a way Odysseus might, rather than with genuine thought and consideration. In regards to this, stories like *The Odyssey* could represent more than a

hero's journey and could become a warning tale about the dangers of unchecked masculinity as it becomes more toxic.

Odysseus is especially interesting to study because his masculinity is not harmful in small amounts, though his excessive display of it becomes a problem. In the cave of Polyphemus, the Cyclops, Odysseus asserts himself as a dominant character, as one would expect from the hero, but the full scene demonstrates how he takes his masculinity too far to prove his worth. He dominates Polyphemus as he views the Cyclops to be beneath him and not worthy of respect or fair treatment. This is parallel to toxic masculinity, as the heightening of one's importance can be built on by understanding others to be worthless for unreasonable differences: race, gender, or sexual orientation, for example. Before interacting with Polyphemus directly, Odysseus considers him a savage; Polyphemus lives on an island where "no flocks browse [and] no plowlands roll with wheat" (Homer 9.135) and when Odysseus calls upon him and evokes Zeus' name, Polyphemus says he must be "a fool, stranger, or come from nowhere, / [to tell him] to fear the gods or avoid their wrath" (Homer 9.307-308). Andrew Szegedy-Maszak argues this leads Odysseus to "[mark] the Cyclops as non-human," (101) as agriculture and loyalty to the gods are crucial to civility and humanity. When Polyphemus does not engage with these acts, he is an outsider and an other. This otherness allows Odysseus to justify cruel acts against Polyphemus, as he is not worthy of fair treatment. When faced with otherness, toxic masculinity frees a person to defend themselves from the dangers of the unknown. The other being does not deserve humanity because it is not human; it is an aggregate of its inhuman and flawed traits.

The climax of Odysseus' time in Polyphemus' cave is especially notable, as it is a head-to-head battle of toxic masculinity between the two as they act on the worst aspects of their masculinity. By this point, Polyphemus has asserted himself to be another figure of toxic masculinity after eating a number of Odysseus' men and is deemed

the “embodiment of unrestrained violence and appetite, whose brutality is brutally punished” (Szegedy-Maszak 100) by Odysseus. Like Odysseus, Polyphemus has taken to acting on his grossly exaggerated masculine traits and falls into an extreme rage which ends in a physical demonstration of violence against the men in the cave. Thus, the interaction between Odysseus and Polyphemus is a battle of masculinity, as they each try to overthrow the other. Odysseus initially plans to attack Polyphemus in his sleep, but before he does, remembers he and his men will be stuck behind a giant boulder that has been rolled in front of the entrance. In a moment of thoughtfulness that contradicts his later actions, Odysseus highlights one of the more positive traits associated with masculinity. The clarity he has here is associated with powerful men who are able to take a step back from impulsive actions and choose to consider all options before making a final decision. Odysseus is able to keep himself and his men alive for another day by analyzing his situation rather than acting on an impulsive desire to overcome without considering all the factors involved.

Odysseus’ display of toxic masculinity returns the next day, though, when he tempts Polyphemus with wine and once the Cyclops is drunk, attacks the creature. In one of the more violent moments of *The Odyssey*, the men

seized [their] stake with its fiery tip
and bored it round and round in the giant’s eye
till blood came boiling up around that smoking shaft
and the hot blast singed his brow and eyelids. (9: 433-436)

Though it could be considered to be justified as a retaliation against the death of the sailors, the violence is excessive and needlessly cruel. When the men attack Polyphemus, they focus on the most physically different aspect of his being, his single eye, and work tirelessly to destroy it. Along with an attack on Polyphemus’ otherness, the attack of the eye is also against his masculinity, as the “blinding has been equated with castration” (Szegedy-Maszak 100). Both the blinding

of Polyphemus and the castration of a man are violent acts with the purpose of taking away a man's identity and worth. They have destroyed the eye, the thing Polyphemus needs most and have taken nearly all he has with the act, which can be compared to castration, as the latter takes away a man's ability to perform the most fundamental thing he can do to continue his legacy: have children. This moment is especially brutal because Odysseus shows no remorse or reservation about his violence. The moment of critical thinking he employed earlier when he almost killed Polyphemus but stopped is long gone, and he now demonstrates nothing but violence for the sake of being violent. Odysseus, needing to show his dominance over Polyphemus, takes all that the creature has because, without his eye, he has nothing and becomes a symbol of defeat rather than masculinity. Polyphemus has lost all power with his eye and is unable to resume a position as a masculine figure due to his newfound weakness and evidence of loss.

The presentation of masculine traits is not necessarily a problem on its own, as even violence can be useful in an instance where one's life is in danger, but the consequences of those traits and the actions from them demonstrate the issues of the traits in question. It is especially important to view self-inflicted violence and destructive behaviors as violence against others because, as *The Odyssey* demonstrates, actions against the self also affect others. Odysseus especially shows the way violence committed against oneself can harm others through his interaction with the Sirens after he is told no man has ever survived hearing the song of the Sirens. He is immediately prepared to become the first one to do so without questioning why he should take another unnecessary risk on an already dangerous journey and risk the lives of his fellow men in the process. His insistence that his men on the boat block their ears with wax so they will not hear the song is especially important, as it demonstrates that he is aware of the danger but is still intent on hearing the song regardless. Following his command, his men tie him

to the ship, and when the Sirens sing, “the heart inside [Odysseus] throbbed to listen longer” (Homer 12.209) and he “signalled the crew with frowns to set [him] free” (Homer 12.210). He has placed himself in a position to be lost to the song, displaying his penchant to inflict violence, though this one is against himself, and the danger that comes from it. The issue of pride and self-inflicted violence merge when it is understood that his action had no valuable payoff and that he has acted so that he will be the sole person with such a bold claim and evidence of his power and strength. Because he can survive the Sirens, he is above the other men and is worthy of admiration for being able to do so.

The text itself supports the idea that Odysseus is motivated by pride in this section as the Sirens sing to him, calling out “come closer, famous Odysseus — Achaea’s pride and glory” (Homer 12.200). The Sirens are able to manipulate people with what would be their downfall, and the explicit statement from them shows that his need to carry his pride is dangerous and known by others when they refer “to the hero’s appetite for new tales about his own heroic virtues” (Nugent 49). Though pride alone is not an issue that can be attributed solely to toxic masculinity, in the case of Odysseus, it becomes a strong factor in how and why his actions are especially harmful for himself and for his fellow men. He is the one with the most at stake, both physically, as he could easily die by the Sirens, and mentally, as failing would keep him from feeling the pride associated with being seen as a hero. He has no concern for his life and is seemingly willing to die as well as risk the lives of his men if it means he has a chance to be the only person capable of doing something new and dangerous.

Odysseus’ heroic nature is questionable as in the actual moments of his listening to the songs of the Sirens, but his reluctance to view the situation critically afterward is particularly condemning. When Odysseus asked his men to set him free, they “flung themselves at the oars and rowed on harder” (Homer 12.211) and two “[sprung]

up at once / to bind [Odysseus] faster with rope on chafing rope” (Homer 12.212-213). In a moment of weakness, Odysseus is willing to succumb to the Sirens and his survival is only secured by his men who reinforce the ropes keeping him tied to the ship and speed up to leave the lure of the song. Once free, Odysseus does not thank the men for their crucial role in his survival. In fact, he does not mention the sirens at all. He calls upon the “courage” (Homer 12.229) and “presence of mind and tactics” (Homer 12.230) he demonstrated in Polyphemus’ cave earlier. He assures the men they “will live to remember *this* someday,” (Homer 12.231) referencing his success against the Cyclops and dismissing his weakness against the Sirens. He tells the men who kept him alive to remember his role as a hero, not a person in distress because his pride, which is a manifestation of his masculinity becoming toxic, will not allow him to be viewed as the latter. The refusal to accept a flaw or moment of weakness demonstrates negative aspects of masculinity as there is a prevailing idea that heroic men cannot have them and should only ever succeed. A person might be more motivated by a prior success rather than a mistake, but the latter should still be processed and understood, as the reflection on failures fosters personal growth and development while the refusal to acknowledge mistakes leads to the loss of an opportunity to learn and grow from them. Someone who is without mistakes is beyond scrutiny and unworthy of criticism, though they present an incomplete image of themselves and their experiences rather than a whole and accurate representation of themselves. An unwillingness to accept criticism is a refusal to change for the better, and Odysseus’ blindness to his flaws is reminiscent of the stunted personal growth a person might have if they embrace toxic masculinity and allow it to convince themselves that they are above making mistakes.

Toxic masculinity is dangerous for everyone, even those who do not personally struggle with it or believe they know anyone who does. Kevin Boon argues that the mythic figure of masculinity

thrives in modern culture and serves “as both an unattainable ideal against which contemporary masculinity is measured and a mythic means of assuring survival” (Boon 301). Though the figure of Odysseus might not be the one to come to mind when thinking about it, his role within *The Odyssey* is crucial in showing the way exaggerations of masculinity and its traits can be internalized and ignored as good and positive signs of manliness. There are two options for reasoning with and handling toxic masculinity: men can either reject the traditional definitions of masculinity and run the risk of being deemed less valuable as men or they can “embrace the testosterone-based behaviors that define the hero figure and pursue the impossible acquisition of superhuman qualities, a goal that by its nature must result in failure” (Boon 301). Essentially, a man must either risk becoming an outcast or embrace the socially accepted role and consequences that come with it. Though it is known to be harmful, toxic masculinity is difficult to discuss, but with the aid of examinations of beloved masculine characters like Odysseus, people can better understand the issues associated with it and the reasons to keep it in check. Through these figures, conversations can be had that address toxic masculinity without condemning people that exist off the written page. Instead of examining real people and their flaws, a fictional character can carry the weight of the criticism and allow people to understand themselves in a more roundabout way. Most people will never battle a Cyclops or face the song of the Sirens, but everyone will have to face their own personal demons at some point, and by understanding where and how Odysseus went wrong, people can face their own troubles in a better and safer way.

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BURN BUT HIS BOOKS:

EDUCATION AND COLONIZATION IN *THE TEMPEST* AND *ANNIE JOHN*

by *Granite Pare*

In *The Tempest* (1610) and *Annie John* (1985), William Shakespeare and Jamaica Kincaid each offer unique perspectives in the education of island inhabitants while subtly influencing their audiences to consider the importance of education on the relationship between colonizers and those they colonize. Colonization has long been a tactic of countries who wish to expand their borders, and, while it is usually neither bloodless nor peaceful, it has been proven to be an effective way to increase the size of a mother country. During the Elizabethan Era, global exploration and navigation flourished, due in part to the interest of the English in the natives of lands other than their own. While the common belief during Shakespeare's time was that the inhabitants of areas outside of Europe were savage, uncouth, and more closely related to animals than to other humans, Shakespeare and the characters he presents provide a different view (Rubiés 121). Although his character of Caliban displays characteristics that are both human and animal, Shakespeare uses this to highlight Caliban's humanity in order to show him as more than an animal and slave. Alternatively, in *Annie John*, Kincaid's portrayal of Annie as an exceptionally bright student who struggles with understanding her role as a citizen in an area run by colonizers highlights the struggle that the colonized underwent as they deciphered their role in their own history. By examining the ways these two works of literature represent education and attempts at civilization, this paper will demonstrate that, regardless of intentions, colonizers often promote the wrong education, resulting in a sense of unrest and anti-

colonial sentiment among the very individuals they are attempting to “improve.”

The first way that both Shakespeare and Kincaid call attention to the topic of education is through a depiction of the information taught by the colonizers to the colonized. Kincaid in particular focuses on the lessons taught to Annie John by her school teachers, who follow an English curriculum. Kincaid implies that, whether intentionally or unintentionally, colonizers teach the wrong version of history to their subjects. Although neither Annie John nor Caliban were native to their islands, both Kincaid and Shakespeare use them to represent the feelings of the islanders and the island as a whole. As Annie progresses through the many levels of her education, she observes that “sometimes, what with our teachers and our books, it was hard for us to tell on which side we really now belonged” (Kincaid 76). As the English proceeded through the colonization of different areas, they gradually begin implementing their own curriculum, histories, and ideals on the areas they controlled. As Annie discovers, these were often quite different from the perspective of the colonized. Because they did not learn their own history, but rather the history of those who oversaw them, colonized people often came to harbor resentment for their colonizers.

Shakespeare, however, uses Caliban to display the ways the colonized were able to undermine the authority of their colonizers. As Caliban is taught by Prospero and Miranda, he discovers that the skills being taught him are ones he can use to his own advantage. Caliban warns Prospero that “You taught me language, and my profit on’t/ Is, I know how to curse” (Shakespeare 1.2.364-65). Caliban bemoans the fact that Prospero has brought this language upon him, but he also realizes that he can use this to speak out against Prospero and assert himself in certain situations. As colonists grew more familiar with being under the rule of a mother country, they began to search for ways to fight back against the implementation of ideals that were not their own. Colonizers unintentionally provided the colonized with a weapon to use against the colonizers. Caliban, with his newfound ability to communicate in a European language, immediately takes advantage of the presence of Trinculo and Stephano to advance his long-thought out plans to assassinate Prospero. Because Caliban is able to

communicate with them in their own language, Prospero has unwillingly provided his slave with the keys to his own destruction.

Kincaid and Shakespeare continue to emphasize the separation between oppressors and oppressed by using similar methods to display the ways difficult relationships are destroyed. Shakespeare develops Prospero's relationship with Caliban into a more fractured state, and Kincaid develops the character of Annie John to be separated from her mother. One of these trends is an intentional effort on the part of Annie's mother to separate herself from Annie, because "[Annie] was on the verge of becoming a young lady, so there were quite a few things [she] would have to do differently" (Kincaid 26). Annie's mother is a major player in the upbringing of Annie as a prim and proper lady and sent her to receive her education as a lady. However, Annie rebels against this idea and lies to her mother about what takes place at these lessons. As Annie and her mother grow more and more distant, Annie becomes wilder. Kincaid uses the introduction of the Red Girl to demonstrate this shift from a prim and proper state to one motivated by mischief and to present Annie's authentic self. As she spends more time with the Red Girl, she fulfills her mother's belief that "Where there's a liar, there's a thief" (Kincaid 63), being so bold as to hide her stolen marbles and books underneath her own house. Kincaid uses this comparison to display the tenuous relationship that exists between the colonizers and the colonized. In *Annie John*, Kincaid uses Annie's mother at times as an allegory for a mother country such as England. Annie's mother often attempts, but fails, to control the wilder side of Annie, who continually undermines her authority despite knowing she is in the wrong. In this same way, colonies of a mother country have operated with disdain for their controllers throughout history, with this continued mild rebellion slowly causing the spirit of the oppressor to be worn down. Just as England's hand of control over its colonies often loosened over time, so does Annie's mother's hold over Annie.

Although Annie and her mother slowly lose mutual respect, like many colonized and colonizers, they present themselves publicly as contented companions. Rohini R. Maheswari argues that "Though the gap in the relationship is clear, Annie does not like to show that to others. She and her mother pretend to care about each as usual. But when they were alone, they avoided their presence as much as possible. They also pretended in front of Annie's father, they seemed to care for each other as same as in the olden

days. Annie and her mother are very conscious that Annie's father should not find the difference in their relationship" (240). Just as England does not wish to display that it is losing hold over its colonial properties, Annie's mother also aims to prevent her husband from knowing that the relationship between Annie and herself is severed. Annie gradually loses the deep respect she displays toward her mother at the beginning of the novel and replaces it with a deep hatred. As Annie finds new ways to undermine the authority of her mother, she harnesses her experiences into building up a wish to leave the island and escape from the haunting memories of her time there.

In a world in which physical realities are often harsh and uncomfortable such as the one experienced by both Annie and Caliban, the subconscious world can provide both freedom and a spark of hope. One of the ways the theme of Annie's wish manifests itself in both *The Tempest* and *Annie John* is through the use of dreams. Both Jamaica Kincaid and William Shakespeare include the ethereal quality of dreams as a way for their characters to express their inner feelings. Both Annie John and Caliban have dreams that begin with peaceful implications. However, these dreams quickly take different paths. Annie dreams

that the boat on which she had been travelling suddenly splintered in the middle of the sea, causing all the passengers to drown except for her, whom I rescued in a small boat. I took her to an island, where we lived together forever, I suppose, and fed on wild pigs and sea grapes. At night, we would sit on the sand and watch ships filled with people on a cruise steam by. We sent confusing signals to the ships, causing them to crash on some nearby rocks. How we laughed as their cries of joy turned to cries of sorrow. (Kincaid 70-71)

While Kincaid includes this dream as a direct, unmistakable reference to *The Tempest*, she also uses it to shed light on the colonists' views of those who oversee them. The cruise ship that Annie and the Red Girl crash is presumably filled with Englishmen and women, and Annie finds joy in their demise. By returning to a more primitive life consisting of "wild pigs and sea grapes" (Kincaid 71), Annie portrays the common yearning among the colonized for a time before their supposed liberation from savagery. Ironically, Kincaid uses *The Tempest*, a staple of British literature, to harness

the true emotions felt by Annie. Just as Caliban uses Prospero's teaching against him, so too does Annie use her English education against the English.

Caliban's dream, although similar in its desire, expresses itself in an entirely different way. Rather than dreaming of the violent death of Prospero, Caliban is fueled by thoughts of "sounds and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not" (Shakespeare 3.2.132). Caliban yearns for a time before Prospero, Miranda, and his enslavement, a time when the island was his alone. Although Prospero believed the education he provided Caliban was to the benefit of the monster, Caliban realizes the opposite is true. Even though he is able to use Prospero's lessons against him, Caliban recognizes that with education comes entrapment. By allowing himself to be educated by his master, Caliban accepts his rule and gives him authority over him. Thus, Caliban never gives in. By constantly dreaming of ways to kill Prospero, as evidenced by his in-depth description of Prospero's vulnerabilities and understanding of his schedule, using his ability to communicate with humans to provide himself with backup in his plot, and understanding that the key to Prospero's strength was his books, Caliban bides his time until the opportune moment to channel his built-up anger toward his colonizer and master.

Another way both *Annie John* and the *Tempest* critique the topic of education is through literature. Both Annie John and Caliban recognize the power that comes from literature and the ability to both read and use texts for personal gain. Annie adores reading and secretly stores dozens of books beneath her house. Caliban, however, takes a route directly opposite of Annie's. When detailing to Stephano and Trinculo exactly how to kill Prospero, Caliban cries, "burn but his books" (Shakespeare 3.2.91). Caliban realizes that the true source of Prospero's magic is not his own strength, but rather the knowledge that he has gained from literature. Caliban also demonstrates his wish for a world without human influence. He quite easily could have claimed the books for his own, and, with his ability to use the European language, quickly become as controlling as Prospero. However, he is able to overcome this temptation through his aim to restore the island to the way it was when he was its chief inhabitant.

Annie John, however, cannot resist the drawing power of books. From wishing she was named after Enid Blyton, the author of the first books she ever enjoyed, to leaving the island entirely in search of a higher education

in England, Annie never displays a Caliban-like resistance to knowledge. Perhaps her most prideful moment in the novel occurs when she creates a work of literature that is to “be placed on the shelf with the books that made up our own class library, so that it would be available to any girl who wanted to read it” (Kincaid 41). Even as a young girl, Annie is fascinated with the library. She would go there with her mother even though “[she] could not read the words yet, but just the way they looked on the page was interesting to [her]” (Kincaid 142). One of her final thoughts in the novel is the sevenpence debt she owes to the library. However, Annie owes more than a monetary fee to the library. By constantly providing an escape from her everyday life, expanding her knowledge, and enhancing her ability to escape the colonized island and create her own life, the library can be viewed as a catalyst for the liberation of Annie John.

Both William Shakespeare in his 1610 work *The Tempest* and Jamaica Kincaid in her 1985 novel *Annie John* explore the difficult relationships that develop between colonizers and the colonized peoples they are attempting to educate. Although Annie John and Caliban display different levels of acceptance and response to the education stimulus, both characters recognize the power that education has and the implications that it contains. Both Shakespeare and Kincaid reveal different ways that colonized people were able to undermine the authority of their parents, from Annie John’s mother to Caliban’s Prospero to England’s role as a mother country. Ultimately, both Shakespeare and Kincaid expose the harsh reality that has accompanied colonization throughout history: colonizers continually misuse the power of education in order to promote the information that they believe is best for their colonized peoples to learn. History teaches us that Prospero, Annie’s mother, and Mother England make a major mistake. Rather than allowing natural tendencies to shape those under them, they promote knowledge that they believe is for the good of those they oversee. From Prospero unwittingly giving Caliban the key to the way to destroy him, to Annie John revolting, hating, and leaving her mother, these texts show that colonizers quite often teach the wrong history and the wrong lessons. Yet in both texts, the colonized are able to manufacture their own learning experiences out of these misguided lessons. These experiences ignite a spark of hope that leads into the fire of rebellion. Kincaid’s *Annie John* and Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* offer an additional opportunity for

education to those outside the characters in their works. Readers who observe the mistakes of the past can understand the experiences of the oppressed and therefore ignite a spark of hope in themselves.

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A PARCHMENT OF LEAVES AND THE VALUE OF
INTIMACY WITH NATURE

by Chance Peterson

My Papaw was born humble. He took his first breath in a dusty tobacco field, right in the heat of summer and the Great Depression. His Father swaddled him in a burlap bag, and took him straight up the road to St. Theresa Catholic church to be baptized. He always said that the priest washed away more dirt and blood than actual sin.

Another time, he told me how he and his younger brother Johnny burnt down the Frymire schoolhouse in the dead of winter because they were tired of walking barefoot through the snow to go to school every morning. He said their feet sure were warm that night though as they danced around the flames of their last vestige of formal education. Despite his rough upbringing and knack for mischief, somewhere along the way he developed a thirst for knowledge, poetry, and philosophy, which he quenched with his own doctrine of life in the cosmos, more specifically the Ohio River Valley.

He would discreetly relay this philosophy to me over the years, usually in his rusty yellow canoe while we floated down Yellowbank creek towards the river or in his meticulously crafted vegetable garden. Whenever the wind would pick up and start whistling through the pallid sycamore trees, he'd tell me that it was God breathing into the earth. He'd then tell me how God wasn't what most people thought it was, that what they taught me in Sunday

school was carved out of fragmentary bits of human emotion and suffering. He told me that God was too fluid and complex to be boiled down to words. To him, the best way to become intimate with the Creator was to become intimate with nature. To him, God was scrawled out through every holler, hill, and blade of grass on Mother Earth. Therefore, like my Papaw's personal philosophy, Silas House's novel *A Parchment of Leaves* relates to me on a level that transcends comprehension and enters the realm of spirituality and strengthens my appreciation for the glory of the pale blue dot we call our home. House compels the reader to take on a new perspective of God that enables the reader to step back and formulate an attitude that is much different than the one that is created in brick and mortar churches. Throughout the novel, House uses revelatory language to insist to the reader that nature is the most genuine source of truth through beauty, and as the self-appointed stewards of our realm we have multitudes to gain through the exemplum of becoming intimate with nature.

It is important to know the definition of revelatory to understand exactly how revelatory language effects the reader in *A Parchment of Leaves*. Revelatory is defined quite loosely as "something that reveals or serves to reveal something" (revelatory). This definition seems relatively straightforward, but some of the most revealing things in life don't appear until you dig into the thick skin of truth. The most revelatory things often call for close analysis to decide exactly what is being revealed. Revelations for example, the last book of the Bible, is a good example of how something that is supposed to be revelatory often creates more questions than actual answers. Sometimes, unanswered questions seem to be better operators of the truth than answers. Dorothy Allison touches on this when she says, "Art should provoke more questions than answers and, most of all, should make us think about what we rarely want to think about at all" (594). This is the case throughout *A Parchment of Leaves*. While House does not directly conjure the existence of God to the reader, he utilizes revelatory language that indirectly reveals a

doctrine of faith through nature, and allows for the reader to formulate questions that can lead to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the views expressed by Vine.

The title, *A Parchment of Leaves*, is one engrained with a naturalistic locution and it's important to note the origins of the title, to gain a better understanding of where it came from and how it begins a pattern of language that I consider to be revelatory. James Still, a monolith of Appalachian literature and poetry, had an enormous impact on Silas House's desire to become a writer and the themes which House would later write about. So it is no surprise that the title, *A Parchment of Leaves*, was inspired by one of Still's poems which also serves as the epigraph to the novel:

I was born humble,
My face was set upon the immensity of earth
And stone; and upon oaks full-bodied and old.
There is so much writ upon the parchment of leaves,
So much of beauty blown upon the winds,
I can but fold my hands and sink my knees
in the leaf-pages. Under the mute trees. (Still 67)

"I was born humble" relays the message to the reader that we are only a small cog within nature's perpetually spinning tumblers, and if we are to let those cosmic tumblers click into place, we must be open to becoming fluent in the language of nature. This breathtaking poem creates a tone that is emulated throughout all of *A Parchment of Leaves*, particularly when the reader is able to tune into Vine's stream of consciousness: "Maybe all the secrets to life were written on the surfaces of leaves, waiting to be translated. If I touched them long enough, I might be given some information that no one else had" (House 70). This type of revelatory language, which is inspired by Still's poem divulges to the reader that Vine understands that we are as much a piece of the Earth as the soil we romp around on. Vine knows we cannot approach any sort of objective answers about the

“secrets of life”, although she speculates they are hidden in the plain view of nature.

This pantheistic view taken on by Vine can be traced back to her Cherokee heritage, a subject she yearns to know more about. Unfortunately, her father seems to be determined on keeping the past from her, occasionally infuriating her, “‘I never knew much to begin with,’ I said more hateful than intended. ‘You all act like the past is a secret’” (18). If it wasn’t for her mother, Vine would know very little of her family’s past and belief system. I am grateful that I do not share this veil of secrecy with my Papaw. He openly tells me stories of his own life, and recounts stories that have been passed down through our family for generations. One anecdote in particular tracks down my family heritage to a defeated Hessian soldier that settled in Kentucky after the Revolutionary War. I cherish these tales of heritage and intergenerational camaraderie, and understand why Vine becomes upset when her father won’t reveal rich family tradition to her. Unlike me though, Vine’s intimate relationship with her ancestors and their presence in the land is one that is strong in many Native American cultures and acutely influences the way they spiritually interact with the world.

The pantheistic view possessed by many Native Americans is beautifully laid out in this excerpt from a letter written by Chief Seattle, an early Native American leader, to President Franklin Pierce in 1853, “Every part of this soil is sacred in the estimation of my people. Every hillside, every valley, every plain and grove, has been hallowed by some sad or happy event in days long vanished...” (Chief Seattle). This type of pantheistic attitude is often captured by Vine in *A Parchment of Leaves*, “I had doubted God, when proof of Him was all about me. He lived in the trees and the rocks. He passed through the trees as a soft wind; my mother had pointed this out to me often” (170). Not only does this reveal she has a spiritual intimacy with nature, but also that her mother was responsible for nurturing this intimacy with a long and rich Cherokee belief system. House

uses this revelatory language to divulge to the reader that there are many more ways to perceive God than the insular Western culture perspective; an elderly anthropomorphic Caucasian deity with a beard as white as the clouds that surround his pearly throne.

House capitalizes on the setting of rural Appalachia before, during, and after the First World War to reveal that this was really one of the last times and places that a majority of Americans had an intimate relationship with nature. This symbiosis between man and nature begin slipping away with the start of the Industrial Revolution and steadily began to degrade with twentieth century technological developments. The introduction of a motor vehicle to Redbud camp shows the foreignness of such an object in those times, “All the children were sitting in it, playing with the knobs. Men kicked at the tires, and women reached in to feel the seats” (27). These rapid technological changes in America hit isolated Appalachia last and House uses this cultural and socioeconomic eddy to show how intimate Americans were with nature before the influx of a more connected human population. When Vine, Birdie, and Luke are on the mountain this human affinity for nature is evident, “There were trout lilies, toothworts, wild geraniums. Trilliums of all kinds covered the field, and there were spring beauties and bloodroots and Dutchman’s britches” (71). The fact that Vine can name all of these flowers is revelatory in the sense that, in today’s world, an extremely small percentage of young people are comfortable enough with our natural world where they can correctly and comfortably showcase this sort of knowledge. This loss of “ecointimacy,” not only reveals current generations’ lack of knowledge of fellow lifeforms, but also the lack of spiritual connections we are creating. I take pride in being able to recognize the trees, flowers, fish, fungi, and mammals by name. It’s a skill my Papaw taught me and I’m grateful for it. He never forgot to remind me that he who can call out the names of his fellow brothers and sisters of nature, is a man who will always have a family to turn.

Silas House's revelatory language not only helps to spin a vivid tale of heartbreak and redemption, but also discreetly creates an attitude that one of the many paths to happiness reside in the heart of nature, far away from the soul gnawing attitudes of human consumption. This is because in nature there is no consumption, only recycling. The human soul can be absorbed through the roots of trees, pumped through the trunk, transpired through the green leaves, where it can fall from the heavens and nurture some other monolith of nature. My papaw truly believed this. He died peacefully in his sleep two summers ago and we honored his wish of having him cremated. He wanted his ashes spread beneath a cedar tree on the black soil of the river bottoms where he was born so many years ago. Papaw believed that his soul would partake in this great cosmic recycling. He passed away just as he was born, humble. Only a humble man who has recognized the glory of nature while alive, can happily bow down before it at death. He was a man who spent his entire life embracing the bosom of the mother of all creatures, Nature. In exchange for the life She bestowed upon him, he knew he had to repay Her by writing his own words upon the parchment of leaves, so that somebody else may one day be able to fold their hands and sink their knees in the leaf pages, under the mute trees.

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PATHER PANCHALI V. POPULAR CINEMA:
A THEMATIC AND TECHNICAL ANALYSIS

by Savannah Rogers

Satyajit Ray's *Pather Panchali* (1955) is an example of budding parallel cinema in India. Parallel cinema in India is similar to independent cinema in the United States through its relationship to the popular cinema of Bollywood and Hollywood respectively. Popular cinema of both Hollywood and Bollywood are very character-centric, often driven by the choices of a single principle character or protagonist. In this sense, audiences are meant to directly relate to the protagonist over any other character and support their desires to reach their individual goals—heroism, nonconformity, peace, wealth, glory, escape, revenge, etc. Individualism is more prominent in American culture, thus lending to a heightened sense of individualism in Hollywood films. However, India is more moderate. “Value dimensions grouped under [individualism], i.e. Independence and Security, are significantly and positively impacting Indian youth culture and so they show positive attitude towards western advertisements depicting western culture with western values” even though “the broad foundation which was laid by Geert Hofstede about the cultural dimension of India that India is a collectivist country” (Singh 151). What differentiates the parallel from the popular Indian cinema, particularly *Pather Panchali*, includes a changing protagonist whose goals may stray or shift, as well as

deeper characterization of multiple characters through certain technical conventions like camera work and sound design.

Pather Panchali is based on a novel of the same name by Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, originally published in 1929. Part of the Apu Trilogy, *Pather Panchali* relays Apu's early life and childhood on a rural homestead in India with his parents, Harihar and Sarbojaya, sister, Durga, and Great-Aunt, Indir. The family surname was adapted from Bandyopadhyay to Ray in the film adaptation. Girish Shambu touches on the independent or parallel nature of *Pather Panchali* and the rest of the Apu Trilogy, stating that "*Pather Panchali* was produced outside of this industrial context, one of India's earliest 'independent' films, and indeed did something new in terms of subject matter and style as well, depicting rural life with a detailed, delicate realism" (2). The film is notably inspired by Italian neorealist cinema such as Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* (1948), to which Ray was exposed during his travels abroad and which also deviates from the popular cinema of that time. Neorealist cinema can be defined as "a style of filming prominent in Italy after World War II, characterized by a concern for social issues and often shot on location with untrained actors." Some overarching characteristics of *Pather Panchali* that are undoubtedly neorealist are the cast of unprofessional actors, portrayal of lower-class individuals—socially or economically, or both—and slower narrative pacing through long takes and wide framing.

There are two significant sequences in the *Pather Panchali* that illustrate Ray's contributions to Indian parallel cinema, especially through the style of neorealism. First is a sequence just after the midway point in the film where Durga and her brother wander through the jungle and into an open field. At this point, Durga has been leading Apu away after he stole tinsel from her to make a costume crown. It is unclear whether Durga's intent is characteristically mischievous or perhaps even vengeful against her brother. Long takes and lilting music manipulate the viewer's sense of time

as they amble through the jungle; making it hard to know how far the children stray from home. The shots are very wide in this sequence; encompassing as much scenery as possible to establish how small the children are in relation to it. The few closer shots in the sequence mainly focus on Apu, making him constant in the scene whereas Durga darts out of sight several times creating more uneasiness as Apu trots along behind. When Apu reaches a field of tall, wheat-like plants, it is a jarring change of scenery from the dense jungle presented throughout the majority of the film. The jungle limits the scope of vision in and around the homestead, but this field has an almost ethereal quality—as if it does not belong—enabling a view of the horizon. It is here that we see the first and only power lines in the film, which add to the otherworldly nature of the space not only through visuals, but also sound. An electrical hum now underlays much more unsettling music as Durga and Apu explore the space. The power lines are also a sudden cue to the time period of the film, which has been very ambiguous—at least to an American viewer—up until this point. Durga lounges in the shade, allows Apu to find her, and offers a piece of sugarcane for him to gnaw on as a sort of peace offering. Sounds cue an approaching train over virtually invisible tracks hidden by the towering plant stalks. Seeing the train is a pivotal moment for Apu's character; however, the audience's connection to him in this moment is severed as the shot jumps the opposite side of the tracks. The train passes by like a barrier between Apu and the viewer, masking his reaction to this experience.

Ray subverts popular cinematic conventions in this moment as a way of preserving an experience. Viewers are not meant to truly identify with Apu because he is unique and no one can truly feel another's emotions. In a more conventional Hollywood film, this sequence would have a few establishing shots, but mostly be told through close-ups and POV shots to heighten subjectivity between the viewer and Apu. In the ideal moment, when the audience craves the close-up most, is when they are robbed of it. We do not see Apu's face at all as the train passes by and there is hardly a mention of it in

the following dialogue. The sequence would also have a suspenseful build as the scene already does, but it might be more exciting and less foreboding. While there are close-ups of some of the characters in *Pather Panchali*, using them more sparingly gives them more emotional weight adding to the humanist quality of the film. There are no true close-ups in the aforementioned sequence, essentially keeping the audience at bay. A Hollywood film might also rely more heavily on a musical score to set the tone of a sequence, whereas in this instance there is an inseparable blending of the diegetic hum of the power lines with an equally unnerving score that fades out halfway through the scene.

In this context, the makeshift crown Apu wears in this scene is a reference to the shallow and distracting nature of popular entertainment—and thereby the popular cinema—in India. This crown symbolizes the influence of popular entertainment on the deeply separate existence of those in rural India. Neither the cinema nor the crown has any practical purpose. Apu crafts his crown from material that does not belong to him in an attempt to imitate a lifestyle that is completely foreign to him after watching a melodramatic play. Bollywood and Hollywood cinema of the golden age—and even more modern films—thrive on extravagance, glamour, and action; aspects of life to which few are privy or that do not exist at all. Essentially, Hollywood and Bollywood are the pieces of fantasy in which the masses can indulge. In a previous scene, a traveling theatre group provides a parody of these superfluous influences on Apu, essentially denouncing their trivial nature. Viewers are cautioned of the harm that can arise from overindulgence in fantasy, but also presented with the importance of fantasy for the sake of escapism and the preservation of childhood. The crown and the train converging in this sequence creates the perfect balance between that overindulgence and pure childlike wonder.

There are similarities in terms of emotional distance and subjectivity between this sequence and the train sequence. A very pivotal sequence of *Patber Panchali* is Harihar's return. Harihar has been away from home looking for work for several months. In the meantime, he never sent any money home, his family has struggled to the brink of starvation, the monsoons have nearly destroyed their home, Durga has fallen ill and died, and Apu has become a man. Harihar calls out for his children as he approaches the homestead and assesses the damage from the storms. Sarbojaya hears him from inside the house. The camera pans with Harihar until he walks off screen, around a crumbling wall, and into the courtyard where Sarbojaya suddenly appears and greets him with silence and a washbowl. As Harihar tells her about his travels and souvenirs, the shot transitions from a full shot of both characters to a medium shot. As he unpacks a sari meant for Durga and hands it to Sarbojaya, the shot gets even tighter; lingering on the fabric as Sarbojaya clutches it and we tilt up to see emotions flood her face. We do not here her sob as poignant music drowns out all other sound. Back to the medium shot, Harihar shakes Sarbojaya until she collapses; her face turned out of view. We now see Harihar at eye-level and dolly-in on his horrified expression upon learning his daughter is dead. He briefly rises out of frame in shock, but falls back down. The camera begins to pull away from the grieving parents as Harihar screams Durga's name. Next, is a match cut to a dolly-in on Apu listening from outside the house.

There are still no true close-ups at what could be considered the emotional climax of the entire film. Instead, what signifies this sequence as climactic is its use of dolly shots. The dolly movements toward the parents and Apu are not replicated anywhere else in the film. A simple close-up would fall short of the emotional weight of the scene because there has already been a significant one of Apu earlier in the film as he watches his mother drag Durga out of the house by her hair. The sparseness of certain techniques is what creates the greatest dramatic and emotional impact in this film. They

intentionally draw attention to themselves. Whereas, popular cinema uses close-ups and dolly movements liberally, and thus sacrifices what might be more meaningful connections with characters for the sake of relentless pacing and plot development. However, this moment in *Pather Panchali* does not let the audience dwell gratuitously on the distraught parents. Just as soon as we begin to move toward them, the camera begins to pull away just as quickly. As an audience, we have already grieved Durga, and the emotion is revisited with Harihar's return, but pulling back and cutting to Apu's reaction aligns the audience more with him than with his parents. Apu has become the man of the house and therefore cannot afford to grieve for an extended period of time. This is also reminiscent of the aforementioned sequence with the train. Perhaps we are not meant to linger on the parents and know their emotions just as we were denied that connection to Apu seeing the train because these experiences are visceral and unique to each individual. While we may sympathize with them, literally taking the audience out and away from that moment is a way to remind us that we cannot truly feel what they are feeling entirely. It reminds us that we are watching a film.

Aside from camera work and shot type, the sound within this sequence is completely diegetic until Sarbojaya begins to sob. Interjecting music in this moment supplements the release of Sarbojaya's emotions, and—like the humming power lines of the train sequence—intermingle with Harihar's voice. In popular cinema, the more conventional tactic in such a suspenseful and climactic scene would have a constant music score that would build throughout the scene until that pivotal moment. It could also be argued that the techniques that mask some aspects of performance in *Pather Panchali*—like the music over Sarbojaya's sobs or the train obscuring Apu's expressions—are simply clever misdirection from amateur acting since this film and much of parallel and neorealist cinema did not utilize experienced or professional actors.

Pather Panchali was at the forefront of emerging parallel cinema in mid-20th century India. It is a film that used established conventions unconventionally or simply ignored those establishments entirely. Adapting and creating a new visual representation of Bandyopadhyay's literary work required camera work, performance, editing, and music unlike that of popular cinema. *Pather Panchali*'s innovations revolutionized this new artistic medium and created a freedom to tell realistic stories outside of an established storytelling formula. Although Hollywood and Bollywood conventions are still very prevalent, there are also more opportunities now than ever to create new and different films at any time, about anything, with or without a million-dollar budget. Parallel and independent cinema have grown alongside Hollywood and Bollywood, and, through his films, Satyajit Ray created a truly Indian cinema, and not simply a misinterpreted copy of Hollywood cinema.

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LANGUAGE USE IN CHILDREN'S FILMS AND *ALADDIN*

by *Adrianna Waters*

Research on language in children's animated films shows a trend in the utilization of accents, dialects, and more, with antagonists typically using foreign accents and protagonists using Standard U.S. English. To specifically examine the use of language in children's movies, the study analyzed the film *Aladdin* (1992)¹ to determine how language was used for Arabic accents and villain characterizations. This was then compared to the modern films of *Coco* (2017)² and *Moana* (2016)³ to examine how language utilization in children's films has changed. The study found that, for the most part, *Aladdin* followed the trend of most animated movies for kids by forgoing the predominant culture of the film's setting and using language as a tool for characterization. Two modern animated children's films, however, demonstrate a possibility of progression regarding sociolinguistics by using language as an indication of culture or setting instead of characterization.

¹ All textual references from the movie *Aladdin* are taken from this 1992 Disney version.

² All textual references from the movie *Coco* are taken from this 2017 Pixar version.

³ All textual references from the movie *Moana* are taken from this 2016 Disney version.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The movie *Aladdin* takes place in Agrabah, a fictional country in the Middle East in which the primary language would be Arabic and religion Islam. *Aladdin* is based on the short folk tale “Aladdin’s Wonderful Lamp,” which is part of a collection of Middle Eastern folk tales in *1,001 Nights* or *Arabian Nights*. The film *Coco* is set in Mexico and is inspired by the Mexican holiday Dia de Muertos, or Day of the Dead, in which family members celebrate and remember those who have passed away. *Moana* is set on the Polynesian island Motunui.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language Utilization in Films. Language in films can be implemented for setting purposes by having a few minor characters speak with a particular accent or dialect to establish a location, but the primary reason behind dialect or accent usage is characterization (Lippi Green, 1997). By using linguistic, behavioral, or visual stereotypes, a character’s personality can be established, and only one line of speech is needed to “immediately stereotype” a character (Dobrow & Gidney, 1998, p. 116). Sehar Azad refers to this as indexicality, which is a “linguistic sign [that] comes to refer to a specific meaning” because of associations between the sign and its “social meaning” (2009, p. 5). These automatic associations provide immediate characterization that is beneficial for children, who do not have the cognitive skills to determine personalities of all characters. Thus, because language can be easily used for characterization, animated films for children heavily depend on them.

Language and Characterization in Children’s Films. In 1997, Lippi-Green conducted a study using 24 Disney films produced from 1938-1994 to examine language and characterization, finding a discrepancy between accent and geographical location. The study analyzed 371 characters; 43% spoke with mainstream U.S. English

voices, 33% spoke with varieties of a British English accent, 13% spoke with varieties of U.S. English that were southern, urban, or associated with a particular racial, ethnic, or economic group, 9% spoke with a non-native English accent, and 2% spoke with other English accents. Although approximately 90% of the characters used an American or British accent, only 60% of the characters' movies were in a location in which English would be the primary language. This discrepancy reveals that setting was not the reason characters used American or British accents.

Lippi-Green also studied the roles of these characters, sorting them into positive, negative, or mixed, and negative characters typically used accents outside of standard United States. When comparing their roles to accents, Lippi-Green found that 73.5% of United States-accented characters had a positive role and 19.9% had a negative role. On the contrary, 57.6% of characters with British or a different English accent had a positive role and 30.4% had a negative one. For characters with foreign accents, only 37% had a positive role and 40.7% had a negative one. These associations demonstrate that characters without a United States English accent are more likely to play a negative role, and the probability that children associated language outside of standard United States English with negativity increases.

A 2009 study by Sehar Azad shows that these associations in children's animated films might be changing, as the results indicate more diversity with accents. Azad studied animated movies from 1995-2008 to compare to Lippi-Green's study. Azad's study is not an exact comparison to Lippi-Green's because it used movies from companies besides Disney and only included a sample; however, it is representative of children's animated films of the time period. The study analyzed 554 characters. Standard English accents made up 49% of the characters, 21% comprised of regional or social U.S. English accents, 18% utilized a non-native English accent, 7% used a British English accent, and 4% spoke with other English accents.

Although the results are not completely different, these movies show a better variety of accents with more characters using a foreign accent.

Azad also studied associations between accents and roles, and non-U.S. English accents did not have as strong of a negative association. United States English accents and roles remained mostly the same; approximately 76% of characters with a U.S. English accent had a positive role and 18% had a negative role. However, the roles of British or other accented English characters became more evenly distributed, with 43% of British or other accented English characters having a positive role and 41% having a negative one. The most noticeable change was with foreign-accented characters; 76% had a positive role and 22% had a negative role. While language and characterizations might not have been completely free of stereotypes during this time period, films demonstrate progress since Lippi-Green's study.

Language and Villains in Children's Animated Movies. One trend in children's animated movies is the modification of language for villainous characters. Villains usually speak with a foreign accent or a variety of nonstandard American dialects. While it is sometimes difficult to identify a specific national origin in some characters' accents, "the fact that it was foreign seemed to be the point" (Dobrow & Gidney, 1998, p.115). The most commonly used accent for villains is British English, although European accents in general are often utilized (Dobrow & Gidney, 1998). Historical implications suggest the prevalence of Eastern European accents with negative characters; Cold War tensions or World War II alliances explain the use of Russian, German, or Eastern European accents during the second half of the 20th century (Dobrow & Gidney, 1998). For variants of British accents, the intellect and refinement often associated with the voice help portray a crueler and more cunning victim. In fact, this villain persona was one of two reported to be commonly portrayed in children's animated films. Described as

being a “gentleman of charm and good taste” with “as black a heart as anyone,” these villains often employ British English accents and are unsettling, calculating, and cold (Pandey, 1997, p. 41). On the other hand, the “bumbling, fumbling, stumbling” villain forgoes refined accents and is used often for comedic relief (Pandey, 1997, p.41). For example, Scar (*The Lion King* 1994) would be classified as the first villain while the hyenas would be the latter.

METHODOLOGY

To analyze the language use in *Aladdin*, the study viewed the movie with a focus on accents and dialects. The script of *Aladdin* served as an additional source for examination. The study investigated two specific categories: the employment of Arabic accents or references and the language of villains. In order to compare *Aladdin*'s language to modern animated children's films, the study examined the movies and scripts of *Coco* and *Moana*. The study used a close analysis of the use of dialects, accent, and language. The limitations of this study should be noted. The study only analyzed three animated children's films, and while they may follow language trends, they do not represent animated children's movies as a whole. Thus, the progress of animated children's films suggested here is preliminary.

DATA ANALYSIS

Arabic language as a setting indicator. Because *Aladdin* takes place in the Middle East, Arabic accents were often employed to establish the setting. The movie begins with the peddler singing “Arabian Nights,” and its lyrics make reference to the Middle-Eastern setting, with phrases such as “caravan camels.” However, a major controversy ensued over the song based on previous lyrics that negatively portrayed Arabs. The original lyrics “Where they cut off your ear/ if they don't like your face/ it's barbaric—but hey, it's home!” were changed to “Where it's flat and immense/and the heat

is intense/it's barbaric—but hey, it's home!” (Galer). The change in lyrics prevented a beginning that perpetuates a harsh negative stereotype, but the song, which is sung with an Arabic accent, established the setting of *Aladdin* in the Middle East. This setting indicator continues after the song, with the peddler's first spoken words being “Ah, Salaam,” a common greeting in the Arabic language. The peddler speaks with an Arabic accent, and his character and language use introduce the story of *Aladdin* and the setting of the movie.

The film presents Arabic language as a setting indicator when Jasmine first leaves the palace to go to the marketplace. There are several carts and vendors, and each owner speaks with an Arabic accent. These minor characters do not have more than one or two lines, so their role in the movie cannot be placed into either a positive or negative category. Thus, their function is for setting purposes, and their accents further the notion that *Aladdin* takes place in the Middle East.

While there are no other instances in which Arabic accents are utilized for setting purposes, there are references to Arabic culture that serve the same goal. Similar to how Americans use the phrase “My God,” “Allah,” the God in Islam, is used multiple times in exclamations, particularly by the Sultan. This distinction reminds the audience of the movie's setting. Additionally, the Genie nods to *Aladdin's* inspiration, *1,001 Nights*, in the song “Friend Like Me.” The lyrics “Well Ali Baba had them forty thieves/ Scheherazade had a thousand tales” allude to stories in *1,001 Nights*, establishing an Arabic culture reference to further the setting.

Arabic accents and rogues. Several instances in *Aladdin* pair an Arabic accent with either an antagonist or a character who is portrayed negatively. After the peddler's introduction in the movie, the scene switches to Jafar's nefarious plot to acquire the lamp in the Cave of Wonders. Assisting Jafar is Gazeem, who speaks with an Arabic accent. Gazeem's role as an antagonist is proved through his

dialogue, as he remarks he “had to slit a few throats” in order to help Jafar. Not only is Gazeem evil, he is also not fit for glory. Gazeem’s early death occurs because he is “less than worthy” and unable to enter the Cave of Wonders, an act that diminishes his character. Furthermore, Jafar has other assistants who speak with Arabic accents, such as the palace guards. When they first appear, they are chasing after Aladdin for stealing a loaf of bread to eat, an act that immediately pits them against the movie’s protagonist. Later on, they even assist Jafar in attempting to murder Aladdin when he is posing as Prince Ali.

Minor antagonists speak with an Arabic accent as well. While they might not be a part of the main conflict against Aladdin and Jasmine, these characters are a risk to their well-being. In the beginning of the movie, Prince Achmed is one of the suitors who arrives to ask for Jasmine’s hand in marriage, and he has an Arabic accent. When two children run in front of him, he cruelly yells, “Out of my way, filthy street rats.” When Aladdin attempts to defend the children, the prince responds with “You are a worthless street rat. You were born a street rat, you’ll die a street rat, and only your flies will mourn you!” His dialogue paints him as a callous character, and because it is directed toward Aladdin, he is an antagonist. He is also humiliated by Jasmine’s rejection of him, and the princess refers to him as the “overdressed, self-absorbed Prince Achmed,” furthering his role as an enemy against the movie’s heroes.

Additionally, when Jasmine naively gives a boy an apple from a street vendor without paying, the owner lashes out at her and threatens to cut off her hand for stealing. The owner has a pronounced Arabic accent: in the English pronunciation of “pay,” the phoneme “p” is replaced with “b”; in the English pronunciation of “this,” the phoneme “th” is replaced with “d” (Scott, 1969). His threat not only paints him as a villain but utilizes a Middle-Eastern stereotype to do so. It is only because of Aladdin, the hero who coincidentally speaks with an American accent, that Jasmine is spared.

In fact, the lack of an Arabic accent can be just as telling as the utilization of it. Despite its obvious Middle-Eastern setting, *Aladdin's* main protagonists—Aladdin, Jasmine, and the Sultan—all speak with American accents and are played by American actors, drawing a sociolinguistic distinction: the English-speaking heroes are tormented by and must defeat the Arabic-accented villains. The multiple uses of an Arabic accent for antagonists creates an association between the Middle East and villainy, an action that is worsened considering the film's setting.

Language use for villain archetypes. The movie's two main villains, Jafar and Iago, do not speak with Arabic accents. Instead, the film relies on the dual villain mold described earlier: Jafar is the calculating and cold character while Iago is the "bumbling" parrot whose persona is comedic.

Tall, Dark, Sinister, and British. Following the trend of animated villains like Scar (*The Lion King* 1994), Cruella de Vil (*One Hundred and One Dalmatians* 1961), and Shere Khan (*The Jungle Book* 1967), Jafar speaks with a British English accent. The British accent, which is often associated with intelligence, portrays Jafar as a cold and cunning villain. This is furthered by his low pitch, drawl, and diction. Jafar often drawls out words or phrases, making him appear more unsettling or threatening. His first line, "You are late," is stretched out, which immediately clues the audience in to his villainous status. Jafar employs this slow speaking when talking to the Sultan as well, and the Sultan's obliviousness to Jafar's motives make the villain more menacing. To add to the ominous intellect of Jafar's persona, he uses sophisticated vocabulary or syntax, especially when the line he's speaking has an underlying threat. He refers to Gazeem as his "pungent friend," following the words with "You'll get what's coming to you." He is referring to Gazeem's death, and the use of "pungent," a word not usually employed in colloquial speech, adds to the threat. Jafar uses this language style when he lies to Jasmine

about Aladdin's execution as well. He leads up to the news with "Had I but known," rather than the more casual "If I had known." He later says, "My most abject and humblest apologies," and the use of proper speech and vocabulary make his obvious disregard foreboding. The combination of formal diction and a low-pitched British accent creates an unsettling persona for Jafar that is common in children's animated films.

Iago: Parrotting the Comedic Villain Archetype. On the other hand, Jafar's sarcastic partner-in-crime forgoes formality. Iago's character is not necessary for the plot itself; rather, his purpose as a villain is to provide comedic relief and serve as a contrast to Jafar's menace, similar to villains such as LeFou (*Beauty and the Beast* 1991) and Smee (*Peter Pan* 1953). Playing the role of a dumb and repetitive parrot around anyone but Jafar, Iago is brash, sarcastic, and short-tempered; his outbursts are not meant to be taken seriously. Iago's language reflects his role as a comedic villain. When Gazeem is unable to enter the Cave of Wonders, Iago invokes a tirade and ends his rant with "Look at this. Look at this. I'm so ticked off that I'm molting." When Jafar remarks that Gazeem wasn't worthy enough to enter the cave, Iago says, "Oh, there's a big surprise. That's an incred—I think I'm gonna have a heart attack and die from that surprise." His blatant sarcasm is humorous and serves as a contrast to Jafar's cool and unruffled demeanor. Furthermore, when Jafar sends Aladdin off to die in the reprise of "Prince Ali," Iago jumps in with "Goodbye, see ya," a blunt addition that almost humorizes the moment and once again juxtaposes Jafar's obvious cruelty. Although Jafar fulfills the unsettling villain role, Iago's contrast adds humor to otherwise dark situations.

Language use in recent animated children's films. While the directors and producers *Aladdin* and other animated films in the past may not have been cognizant about sociolinguistic consequences, recent movies show progress, particularly *Coco* and *Moana*. The 2016 Disney film *Moana* uses language to convey the culture and setting

of the Polynesian island. The actors of major characters in *Moana* are of islander descent, and the character names are in Polynesian; Moana translates to ocean, Hei Hei translates to chicken, and Pua translates to flower (Kroulek, 2016). The song “We Know the Way” has lyrics in Samoan and Tokelauan, two languages used in areas where voyaging began (Kroulek, 2016). The use of these languages nods to the culture of *Moana*, but it also feeds into the theme of ancestry. Like *Coco*, *Moana* uses language for setting and culture instead of characterization. Additionally, there is not a main villain in *Moana*, only antagonists that are portrayed more as roadblocks. Two of these “roadblocks” do not speak at all: the coconut pirates and Te Kā, the latter of which may not even be considered a true antagonist. Tamatoa, the only antagonist who speaks and sings, does not appear to utilize a specific accent or language. He is portrayed as a comedic and quirky villain that is highlighted by his idiolect, or “the linguistic system of one person;” however, he does not use a non-United States accent to do so. This prevents a harmful association between antagonists and non-United States language.

Similarly, *Coco*, a Pixar film released in 2017, features an all-Latino cast, a stark difference from the Caucasian cast used in *Aladdin* (Lang, 2016). Additionally, all characters speak with a Spanish accent, regardless of their role. While the original film is in English, there are multiple instances in which characters use untranslated Spanish—*abuelita*, *muchacho*, *de nada*—to add to the authenticity. This maintains respect to the culture and setting of the movie and prevents negative associations between accents and character roles. Because all of the characters have a Spanish accent, there cannot be an association between a non-English accent and antagonist. The film’s villain, Ernesto de la Cruz, speaks with a Spanish accent, but because all the characters speak with a Spanish accent, his actions determine his villainess, not his language.

DISCUSSION

The research shows that animated children's films, particularly *Aladdin*, tended to utilize dialects or accents for characterization purposes. The associations between foreign accents and negative character roles and Standard English accents and positive character roles suggest a bias against countries outside of the United States. However, recent animated films demonstrate progression in terms of sociolinguistics because accent and dialect usage are true to setting or culture. As more children's films—and other movies—shift away from using accents or dialects merely for characterization, we can hopefully remove unconscious associations that fuel harsh stereotypes from our culture.

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