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The  
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# The Ashen Egg

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## NOTE ON CONTRIBUTORS

**Katie Babbage** is a WKU junior from Georgetown, Kentucky, majoring in film with a minor in communication. Her love for film began in high school when she was selected to attend Kentucky Governor's School for the Arts as a New Media student and directed her first short film, *Printed*. She has always been interested in film studies and enjoys the hands-on production experience WKU offers. In her time here as a film major, she has completed a short film titled *Coffee* and a short documentary, *Planted*. Katie hopes to jump into the film industry after graduating in May of 2019 and work her way up to becoming a cinematographer or director.

**Kenneth Curtis Brown** is finishing his senior year at Western Kentucky University. He is an English student with a major in Creative Writing and a minor in Literature. His favorite authors are H.P. Lovecraft and Robert E. Howard. When Kenneth is not writing or working on papers, he is spending time with his family, which includes two daughters and a menagerie of pets.

**Katie Daniels** is an English Literature and Religious Studies double major with a minor in Classics. A Mahurin Honors Student, she has also interned with the Honors College, worked for the *College Heights Herald* and tutored at the Student Athlete Success Center. She loves language in all its forms and applications, and believes that stories can change the world. In her free time, she writes science fiction and fantasy novels and songs about love, pain, and death.

**Brittney Gruber** is a junior from Morgantown, Kentucky, who is majoring in English for Secondary Teachers. She is an Upward Bound Tutor Counselor and plays clarinet in the marching, community, and pep bands. She presented "Read It and Teach" at

the 2018 Sigma Tau Delta International Convention and because of the paper, she plans to complete her honors capstone experience/ thesis by implementing Billy Collins' Poetry 180 program.

**Collin Massie** is a senior English major with an emphasis in professional writing, and a minor in creative writing. He sometimes fancies himself a Chestertonian essayist but is constantly and overwhelmingly humbled by the daunting contrast of wit. Collin has published poetry in *The Remembered Arts Journal* and has an insatiable lust for the works of C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien. An unashamed lover of fairy tales and myths, he might spend too much time in the clouds, but he finds that it's the dreamers who have the best view.

**Valerie McIntosh** is a WKU senior from Todd county, Kentucky. She is an Elementary Education major who is excited to begin her ultimate passion: teaching young kiddos! She will be getting married in the Fall of 2018 and will begin her student teaching in the Spring of 2019. She is a waitress, substitute teacher, and full-time student. She spends her free time (i.e. as if) lesson planning and burning too many candles. She is a lover of literature, coffee, cats, and sleep. She cannot wait to become an effective, student-centered educator who will guide her future students to become meta-cognitive and self-regulated learners who will someday change the world.

**Savannah Molyneaux** is an English Literature and Political Science double major in the Honors College. She currently serves as Executive Vice President of the Student Government Association, where she enjoys serving the student body and listening to under-represented students. She also serves as Chapter President of her sorority, Sigma Kappa. In her free time, she enjoys catching up on political news, looking at pictures of cats and bulldogs, and drinking excessive amounts of coffee. She will graduate in May 2019 and is looking forward to going to law school to be a criminal prosecutor.

**Sarah Redding** is a first-generation college student who transferred to WKU after obtaining her associate's degree from SKYCTC in December 2015. Sarah will graduate in May 2018 with a B.A. in English with a Professional Writing concentration and Literature minor. As a student at WKU, Sarah has enjoyed many opportunities to develop and showcase her work, including

presenting at the 2016 Undergraduate Conference on Literature, Language, and Culture. She currently works as a technical writer and plans to use the critical thinking, analytical, and writing skills she has developed to pursue a career in publishing.

**Madison Rippy** is WKU sophomore from Virgie, Kentucky with a major in History and a minor in Non-Profit Administration. She loves her family, which includes her two adorable dogs. She plans to continue her education with a Master's Degree in Museum Studies and an eventual PhD. She would like to thank Dr. Jerod Ra'del Hollyfield for being her endorsing professor and recommending this publication. She would also like to thank coffee and Tommy Modeszto for fueling the completion of this essay.

**Samantha Schroeder** is an English for Secondary Teachers major from Nicholasville, Kentucky. She will graduate in December of 2019 and hopes to spend some of her student teaching semester abroad. Samantha loves to crochet, play the piano, read Shakespeare, and bake cookies. She currently lives in Bowling Green with her boyfriend and two dogs, but after graduation she wants to move to Colorado to teach literature and climb mountains.

# CINEMATIC BRILLIANCE OR EXPLOITATION: THE ETHICS OF INTRUSION IN DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING

by Katie Babbage

The only element that links any professionally produced film, perhaps, is the paperwork. Following a film through production and post-production takes heaps of legal paperwork and written permission. Any film that uses a location must have a location agreement, and any film that shows people on screen must have a performance agreement. Due to its spontaneity, documentary filmmaking heavily relies on legal documents in order to avoid having participants back out of a film or not allow their image be used. In his book, *Directing the Documentary*, Michael Rabiger states, "Most questions arise from intruding into people's lives and learning from the consequences" (Rabiger 334). Ethical dilemmas are inevitable when in the field because of the nature of documentary production. These questions force the filmmaker to assess their own set of ethics and make choices about what to film or include in a final cut based on the situation. Paperwork does not cover all of these circumstances; therefore, considering written agreements alone is not enough when looking at a documentary's ethics. Though a filmmaker might be able to obtain written consent from a participant to appear in the film, the participant doesn't always know what they are signing up for. Taking this ill-informed trust into consideration, we must conclude that a filmmaker should become an objective voice by acknowledging what is and is not ethical to include in a film. This paper will discuss documentaries, such as *Billy the Kid* and my own short film, *Planted*, to present situations where privacy requests should be considered, as well as use *Borat* and *Sherman's March* to explain the importance of ethically pitching a documentary to participants. I will also look at examples of grief and violence in *The White Helmets* and *Harlan County, USA* to

outline situations in which a filmmaker must decide where to draw the line and let ethics advise them when their camera becomes an unwanted intrusion.

In order to understand my conception of ethics in documentary filmmaking, we must first outline what it means to be objective when filming. Noël Carroll explains that because nonfiction film is selective, it also must be biased in nature (283). Because filmmaking is inevitably biased, it is unfeasible for a filmmaker to be completely objective. In order to have a passion for the story, a director or producer must have some sort of vision for the film, which creates a certain amount of bias. Without this predisposition and emotional connection, a filmmaker would arguably not have the motivation to tell the story in the first place. While objectivity may be impossible to achieve completely, there is a way of looking at objectivity in the context of documentary filmmaking that is doable. According to Carroll, "If selectivity makes bias possible or even invites bias, it is also possible to be aware of this and to design provisions against the influence of bias" (284). By noticing and attempting to work against their bias, a filmmaker is trying to practice objectivity and not only look at one side of the story. After taking a standpoint, a filmmaker's commitment to their ethical obligation lies in whether or not they realize their bias and attempt to neutralize or compensate for it. By truly attempting to take an objective stance, Carl Plantinga claims, a filmmaker has an obligation to use "their instruments of action, by which they inform, persuade and perhaps initiate change" (310). In the context of Plantinga's quote, an ethical filmmaker would recognize their bias and try to set it aside in hopes presenting a situation honestly, rather than attempting to sensationalize or overemphasize it. While it may be unreasonable to expect a documentarian to set aside their passion or opinion on a topic, they still have an ethical obligation to their audience and participants. Ethics, when properly practiced, allow the documentarian to take steps toward becoming more objective in the sense of filmmaking.

One characteristic that attracts a filmmaker to a subject—perhaps the most interesting—is the problem or trouble in an individual's life. This can be an issue relating to family, the law, a school, or society. While this baggage might be interesting to an outsider, to the participant it is very personal. According to James Linton, "The moral obligation of the filmmaker to his 'subjects' becomes a crucial consideration" (19). In other words, through the extended process of filming, the filmmaker develops a

relationship to the participant and must find a balance between the vision for the film and the respect of a participant's privacy. Jennifer Venditti, for example, borders the line of privacy exploitation in her 2007 documentary, *Billy the Kid*. The film follows a teenage boy who is socially alienated because of his mental disabilities. Venditti successfully constructs Billy as a three-dimensional character rather than portraying him as crazy. However, the film includes some intrusive scenes that could raise ethical questions. The climax of the film occurs when Billy gets his first girlfriend and they break up. At one point after the two have split, we see Billy getting upset, eventually closing his bedroom door and asking the crew to stop filming. Venditti makes the choice to ignore his request and continue filming by peeking through his dark doorway. Venditti also includes a voicemail from Billy's mom, who asks her to not include Billy's suicidal threats and cruel assertions he made about his ex. The later ethical issue poses a much more defined question. The audience understands that Venditti filmed Billy confessing these feelings on tape; however, she justifies not using them by using the voicemail. While this does help Venditti make a point about Billy's life, she is not showing an attempt to remain objective because the voicemail still proves that Billy made suicidal threats. Therefore, it is unethical to include the voicemail because Billy's mother specifically drew the line by asking Venditti not to publicize the statements.

When producing and directing my own short documentary, *Planted*, I thought I would encounter many situations where I would be intruding on privacy because my participant—like Billy—is also seen as a social outcast. I decided to follow the everyday struggles of a man from my hometown who describes himself as a homesteader and horticulturalist. My participant, Steve, does not have running water, electricity, or a car and only eats the crops he grows in his garden. I hoped to film how he is often treated and harassed in order to illustrate issues of closed-mindedness and hatefulness within the town. Instead of doing what I expected and not letting me into his way of life, Steve was very eager to show others how he truly lives and to clear up the rumors and stories that circulate about him as well as educate people on his ecofriendly lifestyle. Though he was incredibly open—and even let me film him going to court—I did find that there was a privacy boundary when it came to the inside of his house. I had never seen his home before, and I had often hinted at wanting to do an interview inside of it to reduce the noise of his

neighborhood. However, without directly telling me no, I could tell that he was private about letting people into his house and my asking to see it would be an intrusion on his privacy. Though I had wanted to show his home to give more insight into his character, because of his avoidance, I decided to compromise, and we filmed the interview on his porch. We got along well, and I was happy with the end product because I was able to respect his boundaries and not force him into an uncomfortable situation. Being aware of a participant's limits and privacy borders is the groundwork for ethics because it requires respecting them as a human being rather than merely as a subject.

Intrusion can also occur when participants are misled as to why they are wanted for a film. Paperwork and agreements are intended to be vague so that they cover a multitude of different situations. According to Willemien Sanders, one cannot simply rely on written agreements because "informed consent and quit claims are very unspecified" (Sanders 535). Vague documents are too often the cause for lawsuits and anger towards documentaries because much information can be left out. Instead of relying on paperwork alone, placing responsibility and judgment on oneself can mean the difference between an irritated participant and one who is ready to sue. A particular issue with participants arose when *Borat* claimed to be filmed as a documentary and got its extras this way. The comedy feature chronicles an imaginary character, played by comedian and actor Sacha Baron Cohen, who dupes ordinary people into believing that his character, Borat, is visiting America for the first time. The issues arose when the film was released; the ordinary people used as extras realized they were tricked into believing Borat was a real person. Lewis MacLeod describes how the extras in the film saw the finished product and were unhappy with the way their performance agreements had described it (117). Due to the uninformed consent, those who agreed to be in the supposed documentary lashed out and said the crew got them intoxicated, that their agreements had been "obtained through fraud," or were never actually signed by them (MacLeod 113). Pitching the film to certain people as a completely different genre is undoubtedly unethical. The film's basic structure is that of a feature; therefore, having the participants sign up to be in a "documentary," in order to see how they will react to the character, goes against the ethics of informing participants of their role. The film is an unapproved intrusion that resulted in anger and litigation from the extras.

In relation to having informed consent, the pressure the participant often feels when asked to be on camera must also be addressed. Jill Godmilow and Ann-Louise Shapiro argue that documentary filmmakers must be the most self-conscious artists in the world because they see themselves as heroes and truth tellers, though most don't examine their own theoretical practices (87). A filmmaker often does not recognize when a participant might be uncomfortable and setting boundaries because the filmmaker sees them as a subject and can easily dismiss their human qualities. Sharon Roseman explains how, in what turned out to be a personal-essay film, Ross McElwee originally set out to create a documentary on Civil War General William T. Sherman and his march through the South of the United States but got distracted in the beginning of his project, *Sherman's March* (508). McElwee ended up creating an essay film on how a break-up led him back to his hometown in search of a new love interest and purpose in his life. In attempt to tell his own truth about women and past relationships in the South, the film comments on southern culture and only includes a few related points about the original purpose of his film. McElwee obviously crosses a line of privacy when he films a serious conversation about a relationship with a past love interest. She objects to answering any more questions on camera and says "it is cruel" for him to be filming this. McElwee pushes the boundary that his former lover had set and continues to film by trying to be nonchalant about the camera and just letting it sit on the table. However, this isn't enough. This personal and uncomfortable topic sets the participant off and, as a result, McElwee eventually respects her and stops filming. Personal boundaries vary from person to person; however, consent to film is ultimately up to them.

Apart from an ordinary conversation or everyday life, filming in situations of loss or crisis is even trickier. Taking a step back from what might be a moment of cinematic gold, a documentary filmmaker must decide then and there how intrusive they will allow their camera to be in the given situation. Holly Wissler followed the Hatun Q'eros through the Andes to document their way of life, their representations, and their music rituals in her film *From Grief and Joy We Sing* (37). The filming took a turn when one of the members died and the community began to perform grief songs. Wissler says she obtained permission to film but was still "nervous about what in [her] culture would be an invasion of privacy" (46). Having ethical questions about privacy when filming can be positive because it allows the filmmaker to step out

of the story and ask what might upset the participants or make for an uncomfortable situation. Wissler goes on to explain how the members were actually honored by her interest in their lives, and one even helped her direct the camera to who would be singing next (46). Wissler's consideration and concern for not invading her participants' privacy paid off and the members had a positive reaction to the filming. The only way to assess how subjects will truly feel about the presence of the filmmaker and their camera is to examine their communication and body language and make the best choice based off of verbal and nonverbal cues.

Communication and body language become keys to knowing if a line has been crossed when participants are grieving, since it is hard to anticipate how someone might initially react to losing a loved one. Orlando von Einsiedel's eye-opening documentary, *The White Helmets*, follows the volunteer heroes of war-ridden Aleppo, Syria. The helmets are focused on rescuing those caught under the rubble of bombing aftermaths in the city no matter their political affiliation. When following the men on rescues, Einsiedel is faced with deciding how far to let his camera go in showing the wounded victims and the dead bodies. He is able to deliver his message and make the film powerful, while still striving to be ethical and respectful to those suffering by not showing the gruesome scenes excessively. However, there is a point in the film when one of the helmet members gets word that his brother has died in an attack. Once a participant has granted permission to be filmed, they become a performer because the filmmaker now possesses control over their image (Linton 20). When a person's image is in the filmmaker's hands, they must consciously choose whether or not they will respect the image and any components of privacy that might come with following the participant; therefore, the ethics lie in the filmmaker's hands. Respecting privacy is crucial because, up until a point, the men had been saving strangers, and it becomes personal when one of their own passes. After it is official that the brother has died, Einsiedel takes a cautious approach in continuing to film, but only from a distance. Also, in this case, the man grieving does not seem to be aware of the camera since it is not evident that he sees it. Filming from a distance and limiting the filming shows that Einsiedel is making an effort to be objective because the strategy protects the man's privacy. Additionally, it is not evident through his reactions that the man believes this is an ethical breach.

In order to remain ethical, documentarians must take into account how the situation actually played out and how the

participants reacted to it. Calvin Pryluck argues, "With the best intentions in the world, filmmakers can only guess how the scenes they use will affect the lives of the people they have photographed" (23). The filmmaker must weigh their own attachment to their vision of the story with the issue of how showing their vision might negatively impact a participant's life. Since it is easy to become blinded in what one thinks is an honest and justified story, participants in documentaries can be easy to forget. Pryluck also claims, "Privacy and consent are too complex to be summed up in a dozen words" (22). In stating this, Pryluck—rightfully so—poses the idea that written documents do not at all compare to being in the field and making ethical choices based on what the filmmaker sees. It is nearly impossible to cover every situation that can occur in a dozen written words.

Neglected by most performance agreement documents is the situation in which death might occur. Many argue that crisis situations are covered in agreements because of how general and broad the filmmaker's rights are. However, when ethics come into question, showing an actual death on camera is not ethically covered by a document, nor is the right to film on public property; therefore, it should not be done on screen. Barbara Kopple is faced with handling death in her documentary, *Harlan County, USA*. When a protest against coal mine regulations takes place in Appalachia Kentucky, a young miner is fatally shot, and Kopple is present for it. Instead of showing the shooting, the audience sees a dark screen and camera jostles, but the gunshot is only heard—not shown. By not cutting the scene out completely, Kopple tells the audience that the situation is serious through the sound of the gunshot; however, she respects the young man as well as the chaos of the situation by not including the actual moment or showing its immediate aftermath. While she respects the situation in this sense, Kopple later retracts the boundaries she has set and shows the actual blood and remains as a result of the shooting. This does make a statement on the worsening situation in Harlan. However, including the aftermath denies the ethics Kopple had originally implied through not showing the shooting and exposes the lives lost.

Without a participant to give insight into a lifestyle or event that a documentarian hopes to show, there would be no documentary. That being said, it is important to recognize that participants do have the power to hurt a film's reputation or initiate legal action. At the least, portraying a person in an unethical way could emotionally hurt the participant or

relationships they have with others. A filmmaker must take a step back to realize these are people's lives, not just captivating stories. Jay Ruby understands that documentaries should show that they have been "produced by people striving to be unbiased, neutral and objective" (Ruby 3). The documentarian's main job is ultimately to strive for objectivity, though it may not be fully achievable. By respecting a participant's privacy and identifying what is and isn't intrusion in specific situations, the filmmaker is taking steps toward showing objectivity and remaining as ethical as possible. Privacy varies between persons, cultures, and situations. In being aware of this, it is important to maintain a relationship between the filmmaker and participant by showing that there is an understanding of their boundaries and limits. When a documentarian can set aside their idea of the perfect story and take into consideration the well-being of the people who make up the film, they are demonstrating one of the many ways filmmaking strives for objectivity.

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# WILLIAM ELIOT AND MARY PRINCE: MASKING RESISTANCE AS SUBMISSION IN THE SLAVE NARRATIVE

*by Kenneth Curtis Brown*

Masking is a familiar convention of slave narratives, as many slaves used masking to aid them on their path to freedom. Slave narratives are autobiographical pieces of narrative work that detail the lives of enslaved individuals from slavery to freedom. Masking, more often than not, revolves around deceiving those in power, namely white slaveholders and other pro-slavery individuals, into seeing or believing something that is not truly there. Certain forms of masking often involve the appearance of giving in to the often-vicious demands of overseers, masters, and mistresses. In this guise, “will is indistinguishable from submission” (Hartman 33). When one would appear broken and compliant, a stoicism and resistance is found under the surface. Two slave narratives delve into this convention of hiding will as a means of freeing oneself. William Greenleaf Eliot’s 1885 biography *The Story of Archer Alexander, From Slavery to Freedom, March 30, 1863* and Mary Prince’s autobiographical retelling, *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave, Related by Herself* both represent masking will as submission in order to further a personal resistance against the oppression of slavery.

Veiling one’s own sense of resistance through the outward appearance of subservience is an act found in many slave

narrative stories. Scholar Saidiya Hartman explores the notion of masking will so it becomes indistinguishable from submission, writing that slavery created a scenario “in which pleasure is inseparable from subjection, will indistinguishable from submission, and bodily integrity bound to violence” (33). Hartman’s words outline the binaries that are intertwined for African Americans in the slave narrative. Pleasure, namely that gained by slave owners and overseers, is connected with experiencing the power they hold over the countless slaves under their oppressive ownership. A slave’s bodily integrity is almost always at risk from violence in the harsh world of enslavement. To avoid such violence, sometimes a slave’s best course of action was to appease the oppressive desires of his or her masters. Enslaved people may appear to consent to a slaveholder’s demands in order to affirm that slaveholder’s power. But this seeming display of consent by the enslaved may be a way for them to exercise control over their own circumstances and avoid the punishment that may come with outwardly defying the slaveholder. By subjecting themselves, a slave maneuvers around their owners’ demands and works for their own ends. This method harkens to what Hartman describes sense of will camouflaged to be indistinguishable from submission.

William Eliot’s book, *The Story of Archer Alexander, From Slavery to Freedom, March 30, 1863*, tells the story of Archer Alexander, a slave who would later go on to become a model for the “Emancipation Memorial” sculpture found in Lincoln Park in Washington, D.C. Eliot’s biography recounts Archer as a seemingly faithful and devout slave who is held in high regard by the Delaney family that owns him. For much of Alexander’s life with his masters, there is no turmoil. Eliot goes as far as to label Thomas Delaney as “not only kind and considerate, but he was personally attached to his servant” (Eliot 34). Like other slave narratives, Alexander’s story contrasts his treatment with that experienced by other slaves. He is treated well, according to Eliot, and liked by his owners. Eliot goes further by describing Archer as complacent and even possibly happy with his

situation. Eliot writes, "For Archer no such suffering was in store. He was a faithful man, and was trusted accordingly. As the trust was increased, so was the trustworthiness. He became a sort of overseer" (41). Readers are given the characteristics of a man not only devout in Christianity but devout to his master. Through willfully submitting, Alexander moves into a zone of trust with the Delaneys and climbs through the few ranks slaves can obtain. The rank of overseer is itself worthy of note, as this position means controlling and ordering fellow slaves and also punishing those who defy the orders of the plantation master. Gaining the overseer title would allow Alexander to be seen in some esteem by his slave masters and would reward a certain modicum of trust.

While favored enough by his masters to oversee his fellow slaves, the notion of inflicting violence onto other enslaved blacks exemplifies the ideas of Hartman's work and becomes a masking of Alexander's will as well. By enacting violence on other enslaved people, despite how arduous it could have been for himself, Archer protects his own bodily integrity. The violence and the loss of his fellow slave's integrity furthers his master's enjoyment at the sight of subjection on a large and complex scale. Alexander subjects himself to the commands of the white owners who see him as trustworthy enough to control other slaves and, in the midst of his own subjection, bends the will of countless other slaves. At the loss and sacrifices of others, Alexander conceals his real motives. He gains more status through his docile and compliant appearance. This form of masking and silent resistance creates a complicated situation for Alexander. In many ways, he can be seen as complicit with the racist goals of slave masters and the actions were not without casualties. Countless black lives were harmed, and undoubtedly lost, so that Alexander's mask of submission would be convincing to his white masters and overseers.

The ability to mask resistance allows for maneuverability in the world of being a slave and can place him or her in a position where an opportunity for freedom becomes possible. Eventually, Eliot explains that Alexander provided nearby Union soldiers fighting in part to end the institution of slavery with helpful

information about a recently destroyed bridge they would need to cross to continue their work: "In the month of February, 1863, [Alexander] learned that a party of men had sawed the timbers of a bridge in that neighborhood, over which some companies of Union troops were to pass, with view to their destruction. At night he walked five miles to the house of a well-known Union man, through whom the intelligence and warning were conveyed to the Union troops, who repaired the bridge before crossing it" (46). Through cover of darkness, Alexander covertly relayed the information to close-by Union sympathizers which aided the troops. Eliot explains that "in some way the suspicion arose that Archer was the 'traitor.' Mr. Hollman [his master] did not believe it, but promised to bring Archer before the committee for examination" (47). Years of faithful servitude inveigle even those suspicious of Alexander. Minds could not fathom the docile and pious man who seemed to happily support slaveholders as the culprit for the crime. Masking gave Alexander the ability and privilege and, when his will finally manifested into resistance, his past clouded the judgement of those around him, giving him the time needed to make his escape to freedom when his actions were eventually exposed.

Mary Prince's own experiences under the grip of slavery similarly detail instances of masking an iron will before a cruel world. One of the earliest examples of will in the appearance of submission can be found when Prince discusses being sold at the auction block. Prince's own mother is tasked with the burden of bringing her children to throngs of buyers so they can be auctioned off. Amidst the chaos and dehumanization of the buyers, Prince's mother is silent. At first, readers can mistake this silence as complicit acquiescence or as being distraught or traumatized for having to lose her children. But silence for enslaved people can be a result of a quiet resistance against the degradation placed upon them. Prince recounts, "At length the vendue master, who was to offer us for sale like sheep or cattle, arrived, and asked my mother which was the eldest. She said nothing but pointed to me" (62). While later passages recount solitary moments where Prince's mother weeps along with her

children, she keeps a stern resolve in the face against the auctioneers. Prince's mother appears to use her silence and compliance as a way to resist against the terror of the auction block. Those that run the slave block and the gathering of slave owners are pleased at the subjection of Mary and her mother. The slave buyers expect to get under the skins of Mary and her mother, but the silence displayed resists against this expectation while at the same time quietly complying with commands. The silence exhibited by Mary's mother not only saves face but also provides a type of agency for Prince's mother. By keeping her emotions private, Prince's mother retains a small semblance of a private life, a privilege that was nonexistent in the life of a slave. The action of keeping her emotions private in such a public setting allows Prince's mother to keep a small sense of agency to herself. In this regard, Prince's mother protects them both from more extreme brutalities if the slave-owning populace was displeased with them. While the silent acts of Prince and her mother do not belie some scheme or plan, the idea of remaining stoic in the face of oppression can be an act of resistance. The horrors of slavery do not outwardly affect Prince's mother, and she uses this calm demeanor to keep her own children at ease in a turbulent and traumatic moment.

Alexander and Prince mask their resistance with a silence and a nature that their former masters mistake for servitude. Instead they do not see a quiet storm on the horizon that thunders with resistance and an indomitable will that strives for the escape of bondage and into freedom. Both of them and other escaped slaves mask their true nature and continue a ruse that is often surprisingly indistinguishable from submission.

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## A BRIEF HISTORY OF GEEKS

by *Katie Daniels*

As long as language has been recorded, the human race has been using it in colorful ways to insult or deride “others.” In the late 1980s, with the rise of the digital age, a peculiar insult came into common usage to describe students who were unfashionably studious, socially inept, and obsessed with things deemed by the “popular” kids to be “uncool.” Although *dork* and *nerd* have also had their heyday, the derogatory *geek* is of particular interest due to not only its past, but also its relevant future. Unlike its awkward sister *nerd*, *geek* has risen through the ranks from schoolyard insult to a self-ascribed epitaph that can be worn with pride. The history of this word gives insight not only into how language shapes culture, but also how culture can take control of and redefine language.

Although it is barely a century old, the word *geek* has already had a rich and colorful history. An early form of the word can be traced all the way back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century where it served as a synonym for fool or foppish person. It enjoyed a bright but brief career as an extremely specialized type of circus sideshow performance until, in the 1980s, it was adopted as an insult for the socially inept or unfashionably studious in the 1980s. With the rise of computers, and the interest that exceptionally studious social outcasts developed in this new technology, *geek* morphed once again to mean someone who is especially experienced with computers and information technology. Today the word *geek* is being reclaimed by the sub-culture it describes and while new definitions emphasize the good qualities of the self-described

geek and dismiss the previous negative connotations that the word has carried since its birth.

### Shakespeare's Geek

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the etymology of *geek* is unclear, but it is mostly likely derived from the low German *geck*. The word *geck* dates back as far as 1530, where it first appears in Alexander Barclay's "Egloges" (*OED*, "geck") and is defined as a fool or simpleton. A century later it was even being used by William Shakespeare:

Why have you suffer'd me to be imprison'd,  
Kept in a dark house, visited by the priest,  
And made the most notorious geck and gull  
That e'er invention play'd on?" (*Twelfth Night*, V.i.330-33)

The first written occurrence of the "geek" version of *geck* appears in a little book called *A Glossary of Yorkshire Words and phrases, collected in Whitby and the Neighborhood. With examples of their colloquial use, and allusions to local customs and traditions. By an inhabitant*. The "inhabitant" was, in fact, one Francis Kildale Robinson, and the book was published in London, 1855. Geek is given only a brief appearance in the entry: "A gawk, gowk, geek, or gawky, a fool. 'Rather gawky,' foolish" (Robinson 69). The word "gawky" can still be found in current usage to mean "ungainly" or "An awkward, foolish person" (*OED* "gawky"), while "gowk" appears to have died an obscure and unmourned death and appears in no dictionaries whatsoever. "Geek," on the other hand, would go on to have a colorful career as both a school insult and a term to identify a type of circus performer.

### Circus Geeks

In 1919 in Cincinnati, twenty years before the earliest digital computer would be built, a self-proclaimed geek man posted an advertisement in *Billboard Magazine* announcing his desire to join a circus traveling south (*OED* "geek"). This was nothing all that uncommon in the early twentieth century in the United States. A similar advertisement in the same publication in 1946 reads:

“Florida Amusement Co. Wants: To join at once capable Grinder for Geek show. Best Geek on road” (Billboard “1946” 61). And in 1955: “Want manager for geek show, will furnish complete outfit. Must be experienced Operator with Geek” (Billboard “1955” 64). So what is a circus geek? It is, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, “A performer at a carnival or circus whose show consists of bizarre or grotesque acts, such as biting the head off a live animal” (OED “geek”). Arthur Lewis explains in his 1970 novel *Carnival*: “An ordinary geek doesn’t actually eat snakes, just bites off chunks of ‘em, chicken heads and rats” (qtd. in etymonline.com). In 1965, Bob Dylan released a song that referred to geeks in their circus sideshow incarnation:

You hand in your ticket  
 And you go watch the geek  
 Who immediately walks up to you  
 When he hears you speak  
 And says, “How does it feel  
 To be such a freak?” (“Ballad of a Thin Man”)

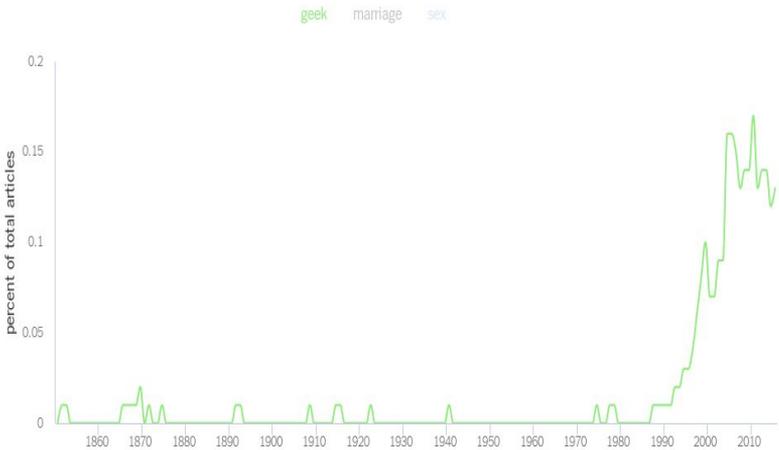
A freak is defined as “An abnormally developed individual of any species; a living curiosity exhibited in a show” (OED “freak”). In this way the word geek went from being synonymous with “fool” to becoming a synonym for “freak.” It is, perhaps, this definition that school children had in mind when they began to use it to taunt those who didn’t conform to social expectations.

### Geeks Go to School

In 1988, the *New York Times* published an article called “Youthspeak” by Richard Bernstein. In it, the author discusses the slang produced by school and colleges and briefly mentions the use of the word *geek*. “Students have a host of words to refer to other students who study a great deal or who have the sort of seriousness of purpose that, when combined with a pronounced lack of social graces, produces what used to be called ‘grinds’ or ‘nerds.’ The new insults are dweeb, geek, goober and wonk. And corn dog, goob-a-tron and groover” (Bernstein). These students had discovered definition b in the Oxford English Dictionary: “An

overly diligent, unsociable student; any unsociable person obsessively devoted to a particular pursuit” (OED “geek”). The intellectual aspect of being a geek is further expounded on by Stephen Jay Gould who, in 1991, recalls: “Any kid with a passionate interest in science was a wonk, a square, a dweeb, a doofus, or a geek” (Gould 96).

But something else was going on at about this time. In 1976 Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak started Apple Computers, in 1981



the first IBM personal computer hit the market, and in 1985 Microsoft released the first Windows PC (Zimmermann). Studious geeks were entranced by this new tool for learning, and so being a geek and being good with technology quickly became synonymous. Oxford added definition c to its dictionary after it appeared in a Usenet newsgroup in the form of a rhyming couplet: “I was a lonely computer geek / with a program due most every week” (OED “geek”). The rise of computer technology most likely contributed to the rising popularity of the word. Usage of the word in the *New York Times* had previously spiked at merely 0.02% of all annual articles. But in the 1980s it began to climb, and by the year 2000 usage had increased a hundredfold—appearing in almost 0.2% of all published articles (“The Chronicle”).

## Geek Culture Today

From the day they arrived, it was obvious that computers were here to stay. Geeks, in their role as computer specialists, went suddenly from being objects of ridicule to important and necessary members of society. This point is illustrated humorously in the following definition created by “longislandguy” for Urban Dictionary: “Geek—The people you pick on in high school and wind up working for as an adult.” Students who were ridiculed in school as “geeks” were now millionaires, or billionaires. Demand for qualified tech support was increasing faster than workers with that sort of specialized skill were graduating. In 1999, David Brindley reported that “teenagers aged 13-17 listed software development as one of their top three career choices, according to a survey last year by the Institute for Youth Development” (9). He went on to say that with salaries starting at \$50,000, “being a geek doesn't seem so bad.”

With the rising popularity of geeks, what had started out as a derogatory term was soon being brandished about as a badge of honor. In 2003, Yvette Beaudoin, self-described geek girl and coiner of the phrase “geekology,” created an online “geek test” where users could determine their level of “geekiness.” The test is now in its third version and has been translated into four languages. Beaudoin lists aspects of geekiness categorically, including everything from knowing computer languages, to knowing dead languages, to knowing fictional languages such as Klingon. Playing role-playing games, attending science fiction conventions, and writing fanfiction can all score points on the test, as well as exhibiting poor social skills in school or participating in “geeky” school clubs. In a 2013 phone survey reported by *Entrepreneur* magazine, “87% of Americans do not “sneak their geek” [i.e., hide potentially embarrassing passions or interests]” (16). 68% of Americans also reported that they would be willing to date a geek.

For the first time in five hundred years, being a geek is not insulting, degrading, or humiliating. The phrase has been reclaimed by the cultural group it describes. This is illustrated by Eric Raymond in his “Jargon File.” The Jargon File is a glossary of

slang terms used in the hacker community. Here is his definition of geek: "A person who has chosen concentration rather than conformity; one who pursues skill (especially technical skill) and imagination, not mainstream social acceptance." It is worth noting that this definition is essentially identical to definition b in the Oxford English Dictionary. But while the *OED* paints an unattractive picture of an "obsessive, unsociable person," Raymond puts these same attributes in a positive light, praising pursuit of imagination as an admirable goal and more worthwhile than "mainstream social acceptance."

### **Conclusion**

*Geek* has come a long way in a few short centuries. After spending ages as a synonym for a foolish person, or one who had been made a fool of, it gained a sudden bizarre popularity as a synonym for freak when it was used to describe a very specific and disgusting sort of circus side show. In the 1980s, with the rise of information technology, it was simultaneously adopted as an insult for the unfashionably studious and as a derogatory term for people who understood and built computers. As long as computers remained a novelty, geeks remained a laughing matter, but the world quickly became dependent on this new technology and, by extension, those who created it. Wealth and power came quickly to the geeks, despite their social awkwardness, and today being a geek is sign of high intelligence and cult status, rather than something to be ashamed of.

The recent evolution of the word geek is a powerful testament to the power of groups of disenfranchised people to seize control of their own narrative. Realizing that the insult was never going to go away, members of the group chose instead to subvert it. In thirty years, a dedicated group of underdogs undid four hundred years of linguistic tradition, turning a time-honored insult into a status to be proud of and daring anyone to use it otherwise. Today there are companies tailored specifically to geeks, dating sites for geeks, and book and film protagonists who are geeks. The history of Shakespeare's "geck and gull" is marked by ignominy and ridicule, but the future is coming, and it belongs to the geeks.

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## READ IT AND TEACH

*by Brittney Gruber*

In numerous articles of the National Council of Teachers of English's *English Journal*, teachers discuss poetry and their reservations about the subject. Some have fears because they never had models which showed them how to teach poetry (Lockward 65). Even at Western Kentucky University, English for Secondary Teaching majors are not required to take a poetry or creative writing course. Poetry can be used to teach a variety of concepts, including English as a Second Language and geology, but *how* does a secondary teacher best teach poetry? The most effective method is exposure. Those with fears of poetry who do not teach it only welcome their students into the cycle of hesitation and evasion. Educators are models first who can create foundations of poetic knowledge for their students. By incorporating poetry throughout a language arts class and allowing students to read a range of poems, a teacher gives them experience and generates interest.

Why should teachers teach poetry? Well, why would they not? Poetry is as valid a topic as is grammar, literature, research, or drama. Teachers cannot pick and choose because their jobs are to prepare students. For instance, an algebra teacher cannot skip polynomials because they are not his or her area of expertise. The ideas, techniques, and history taught through literature can be taught through poetry, and poems can be as engaging as the young adult novels or comic books students read. Many canonical works even possess titles that were inspired by or come directly

from poems (“List”). Poetry is a method to teach other subjects and is a great way to incorporate literacy into all classes. Plus, a poem may be more versatile than a short story or book because students can read poetry more quickly and a poem’s placement within the class period is flexible.

### **Thinking Outside the Unit**

First, teachers should discontinue teaching poetry in independent units because constricting a genre to a unit makes connecting poetry to other facets of language arts difficult. Doing so also limits students’ poetry experience to a week or two out of a semester or year. Students view units as endurance tests with material that can be forgotten after assessments. Furthermore, teachers plow through poetry due to their own discomfort of the subject, creating discomfort for their students. If poetry is spread out throughout the class, students remember the information and relate it to other material, assignments, and events more effectively. Integrating poetry with the other materials also underscores to the student that poetry is important and ever-present. Many teachers have grammar exercises multiple times each week so students will practice their skills and constantly refresh their memories; this is exactly why poetry should be taught in the same fashion. In addition, if exposure is the key, incorporating poetry into each week or even each day increases quantity and quality of knowledge, and that is the larger aim of education. Still, teachers must beware of analyzing, interpreting, and explaining poems too much. If students only remember the teacher’s explanation of a poem or the teacher “ruins” a poem by belittling the students’ opinions, nothing is gained. In addition, Margaret Ackerman asks that if students can remember and connect the contents of poems, “why not intersperse them with novels, plays, essays, and short stories, letting them be the common factor?” (1000). Ackerman’s question echoes the idea of freeing poetry from a unit and introduces another method called paired text instruction.

### Practices to Incorporate Poetry

Paired text instruction is a technique in which two related texts are read together to aid understanding of both pieces, such as Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl* and a news article about the Holocaust. It is a method to teach both language arts material through poetry and poetry through other texts. Through pairing texts, Tara Seale shows her students how poetry is personally relevant. She pairs Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself" with William Deresiewicz's "The End of Solitude," an essay contemplating how people relate to others and themselves and how they reflect on their desires, so that students begin understanding Whitman's reflections, emotions, and actions (13). She then creates a discussion about isolation and relates the concept to college application essays; this allows students to learn about themselves and to create ideas for their essays that showcase their individuality and goals. Ackerman says using poems in paired texts allows them to be "artistic expression[s]," not simply examples of poetry (1001).

"Poetry how-to" books are useful for a teacher who wants to move beyond exposure or who faces students demanding answers about poems. Educators should not hail these books as Bibles, but students should be taught to explore poems while reading them. Tania Runyan's *How to Read a Poem* is a great guide because she explains poetic techniques thoroughly, provides her own examples, and includes several poems within each chapter for practice. She advises readers to examine imagery, sound, and line breaks across multiple readings. She also challenges them to find the "aha! light switch moment" and to read without researching allusions or the poet's lives. Through each step, Runyan includes several follow-up questions that allow students to cultivate and support their ideas.

Regardless if a teacher will use paired texts or poetry guidebooks, students need to read poetry frequently; this was the reason for dismantling the poetry unit. Mark Yakich suggests beginning each class by reading a poem chosen by a student to allow "students to practice their oral skills" and "aural awareness" (102). Similarly, Diane Lockward argues for teachers

to read poems aloud multiple times to “[e]xpose students to beautiful, powerful language,” in the same way that teenagers replay their favorite songs (66). This task engages the students in finding and sharing, allows them to connect poems to class material (and vice versa), and gives students more exposure to poetry. Students will find poems they personally enjoy and enrich the environment with a variety of interests and forms. One teacher incorporates a similar activity, and her criteria state the poem must “be readable in less than three minutes; be easy for listeners to understand; be something the chooser likes very much; use language appropriate for a school setting; cause listeners to think; cause listeners to want to hear the poem again or read it for themselves” (Jago 21). When a teacher chooses the poem to read, Yakich said “she shouldn’t have an agenda” for it, and she should not have prepared (162). For high school classes, this method may be impractical, but there is a point. To engage students and make them aware of as much poetry as possible, a teacher could pause class for a brief discussion about a poem randomly found; the purpose is to be flexible and show students that poetry is more than their preconceptions.

### **A Poem a Day Keeps Teachers’ Fears Away**

Billy Collins goes one step further and argues the whole school should start each day with a poem. While he was United States’ Poet Laureate, he created his own method of instruction called “Poetry 180: A Poem a Day for American High Schools” as a clear way to give students exposure, especially in high school “where poetry goes to die” (xvi, xvii). Collins aims to create cognitive dissonance by introducing all the students who despise poetry to poems they love (xxii). The number of poems corresponds roughly to the number of days in the school year, and a school should have a person read a poem a day “as part of the public announcements” (xvi). Students can “hear poetry on a daily basis without feeling pressure to respond” and without teachers creating a “hunt for Meaning” (xvi, xix). The poems are indexed at [loc.gov/poetry/180](http://loc.gov/poetry/180) where Collins included tips to read poetry aloud; for the educators who like to save time and printing

resources, the book *Poetry 180* contains the poems with an introduction explaining the program (xvi, "Poetry 180"). *Poetry 180* sounds revolutionary and exciting, yet as an administrator's daughter, it is impractical. There will be interference: the administrators will be skeptical, the office staff will be irritated, and the teachers of other subjects will complain that language arts is being favored. Convincing a school to participate will take work, but students will reap the benefits of an educator who is passionate about literacy and poetry.

### Reading Poetry

If a teacher introduces a poem in class daily, or even once or twice a week, students will become more open to poetry. A great transition towards reading more poetry is novels written in verse. Through these, students see poetry in a new form. Moreover, those who do not like to read may not be as intimidated by verse as they are by seemingly long books. Better yet, a novel allows a reader more time to focus on the voice of the poet and helps her cultivate her own poetic voice (Schmidt 92). Although *Love That Dog* is for middle grades students, it is a popular book in verse and focuses on poetry. The protagonist reads poems in his class and shares his negative views. Yet because he is forced by his teacher, he writes his own poems and discovers the process helps him cope with the loss of his dog. The protagonist in *Coaltown Jesus* is coping with the loss of his brother, and Ron Koertge created both a book of Christian fiction for middle schoolers finding faith and a secular book that all students can enjoy. While juvenile, these books are emotional and will resonate with students. Similarly, Ellen Hopkins' *Crank* series is for secondary students and describes difficult issues like substance abuse and self-harm. The books not only tackle difficult personal issues, but also show students how to use poetry to cope and convey emotions. Other novels, though, are not heart-wrenching. *Song of the Sparrow* by Lisa Ann Sandell is a retelling of an Arthurian legend and would serve as an excellent pairing to engage students in historical texts like *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. In addition to students reading verse novels, teachers can use excerpts to teach techniques like figurative language.

### Memorizing Poetry

After reading, a teacher hopes his or her students will remember at least parts of texts and poems after the class or maybe even later in life after graduation. Would memorization of poems or paragraphs of prose assist retention, and if so, should teachers require students to memorize and recite poetry? Many educators and professors memorized poetry in their educations, but “because it has always been taught” is not enough justification. The act of memorization is beneficial for certain contexts and for the brain. In her article, Lisa Van Gemert says memorization helps people learn English syntax and widen their vocabularies, and she includes links to resources like *Poetry 180* for the reader to begin memorizing. Memorizing more and more information creates new neural pathways and assists in neural plasticity. Tom Hunley convincingly defends memorization by saying, “[s]tudents who can memorize television jingles, rock and rap lyrics, and baseball statistics, can also memorize poetry.” He notes many catchy sayings or mnemonics people tend to remember use poetic devices: “Lefty loosey, righty tighty” is an alliteration that rhymes, and HOMES meaning the Great Lakes is like an acrostic poem.

However, memorization can be an obstacle in the classroom. A student does not understand a concept only because she memorized it, and too often memorization leads to forgetting. Benjamin Bloom’s taxonomy revolutionized education by stating knowledge (or remembering) is the lowest level because students can passively remember ideas. Because educators attempt to scaffold students onto the taxonomy’s higher levels like application and evaluation, many shy away from explicit memorization for their students even though it can be useful. Reciting poetry is an exercise in public speaking and presentation skills because students give speeches in class anyway. Likewise, memorizing a poem gives a sense of ownership because the person internalizes the words (Collins xix, Hunley).

For students to truly understand and retain anything, it needs to be pertinent to their lives, they need to use the information often, and they need to form connections to other information

they know. If a student discovers a poem he loves, he may automatically remember parts of it or want to memorize it. Plus, if teachers can incorporate poems frequently, students will make connections between poems and connect poetry to other material leading to better understanding and memory. Therefore, teachers not only instill poetry into students' minds but also teach them how to learn. If educators plan to require memorization, they should give students plenty of time and not grade too harshly. For additional help, they can check Hunley's tips at the end of his article or John Hollander's *Committed to Memory* at poets.org.

### Writing Poetry

While students certainly learn by reading, writing poetry is also useful because "when you pick up a pen, you stop holding poetry at arm's length" (Alderson 8). Students may fear writing poetry even more than reading it, but making a creative space alleviates the pressures and forces students outside their comfort zones. Plus, "if [teachers] do not provide opportunities to write poetry, [they] deny that any of [their] students are capable of becoming poets" (Lockward 69). Students can generate ideas not only for poems to write but also about essays to write. They can also generate ideas about poems read previously because "[w]hen students are allowed to write their own poems, they also learn to analyze as writers" of any genre (Lockward 69).

Imitation poetry is a way to teach writing while still giving students exposure to poems. Taking the idea from *Love That Dog*, April Brannon created three exercises based on contemporary poems. Mary Oliver's "The Sunflowers" captures the image of the flowers by personifying them, and students imitate the poem by focusing intensely on objects they see in their daily lives (54-55). This exercise creates the path for a discussion about imagery and figurative language and teaches students to think outside the typical ways to describe objects. Oliver writes, "their dry spines / creak like ship masts . . . they are shy / but want to be friends," but many people would not think of comparing flowers to ships (Oliver). Another exercise is based on Ellen Bass's "Relax," a list of "terrible things that can happen in life" (53). Brannon wrote her

own imitation of "Relax" for college students preparing for student teaching and says the lesson would be beneficial during the first week of school (53-54). Not only would the exercise create a precedent for poetry in a class but would also be an engaging icebreaker that allows the students and teacher to assess their doubts for the school year. The teacher can discuss with students to ease their worries, and everyone can create goals for the year. Plus, the activity creates its own follow-up: during the last week, students can revisit poems from the class to imitate or revisit their imitations of "Relax" to end the year on a positive note with poetry. Mark Yakich does not call this writing imitation poetry, but he said a person "will gain a greater understanding of a poem by writing a single parody of it than by reading" criticism (87). Writing a parody requires a person to closely analyze the poem and question the poet's intent to create his own. Students will spend more time with poems and examine rhythm, diction, line breaks, and punctuation more closely.

The imitation method is most effective with uncommon forms and content. Whether or not students think they have backgrounds in poetry, they do, but they may not know specific forms like villanelles or sestinas. For example, Bianca Lynne Spriggs' "On Falling" is a triptych made of three poems "displayed side-by-side" to form a fourth poem that "is read horizontally" and "completes the theme" (Spriggs 27; Beekeeper71). Students may enjoy this form and could see the challenges of creating triptychs. If dialects are taught, a teacher could encourage students to use their own dialect in certain assignments like personal narratives and of course, poetry. One could imagine this being especially beneficial in rural schools where students speak Appalachian English, urban schools where African-American students speak African American Vernacular English, or any schools with high populations of English Language Learners where code-switching is commonplace. Sherry Cook Stanforth's "App, Too" includes her dialect through words and phrases like "sooth-saying holler witch," "twang," and "hilljack" (18). By imitating Stanforth, students can show their diversity and challenge stereotypes.

Once students have mastered imitation poetry, they can move toward writing their own poems through Daniel Alderson's *Talking Back to Poems*, a guide that "asks [the reader] to write poetry in response to other poetry" (Preface) and to "notice things" like sound, imagery, structure, and meaning (9). His instruction varies slightly from Brannon's imitation poetry because the goal is not a replica. For example, prompts state to use the same rhetorical device, write a poem with "two short stanzas," or follow a specific rhyme or meter (87, 84). Alderson ends the book asking for a poem that simply "echoes the [prompt] in some noticeable way," and includes a glossary of poetic devices that gives concise definitions and examples perfect for the classroom (90).

## Conclusion

As a teacher would discuss William Shakespeare's life and various aspects of *Romeo and Juliet* before reading, he should also discuss a range of poets and poetic aspects. Experience creates familiarity so students will be prepared to read poetry in college or have an appreciation for poems recited on television like "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" in America's Biopharmaceutical Companies' commercials. There are many methods to teach poetry, and writing poetry is important, but exposure through reading is critical to give students foundations in high schools.

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# AN ANALYSIS OF VIRGIL'S *AENEID*: DIDO'S FREE WILL

by Collin Massie

The blurred lines that divide Dido's actions between free will and forced will in *The Aeneid* spark a lot of controversy—perhaps more so because that controversy reflects many readers' preconceived beliefs about individual free will on a more general scale. This inevitable question pops up in our own culture through multiple facets: religious life, advertising, propaganda, governmental authority, and agenda-motivated news. It permeates general psychological discussion due to the concept of Freud's theory of transference, arguing that the person we become is largely, if not entirely, based on childhood circumstances rather than free action. This topic in *The Aeneid* seems to provoke such divisive views because it reflects a larger and deeper philosophical concern: how much free will do we really have?

Classical myths like *The Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* allow us to consider our natural surroundings and our emotions from a different lens, which is often beneficial for working out our own conclusions on the nature of free will. In fact, this is the reason for much of my own passion regarding classical myths—that they provide wonderful new (or old) ways of looking at the real world, which are not often recognized. Yet, in regards to literary analysis itself, this method only gets us so far; it is easy to end up projecting too much of our own contexts onto a work of myth, and this leads us to conclusions not necessarily supported by the actual text. We end up looking at Dido as representative of either ourselves or someone we know and the influences

surrounding her as merely characterized emotions rather than characters themselves. Who Venus is to Aeneas is not who Venus is to us—to Aeneas, and everyone else affected by her in *The Aeneid*, she is a person; to us, she is an idea. With that in mind, it should be stated that this essay is not an argument for a wider-reaching philosophical discussion; it is not a look at whether or not Dido, as the embodiment of obsessive passion, can be held accountable for her own actions; it is rather a look at Dido herself, as the literary character, and deciding whether or not she can legitimately be blamed for what led her to her suicide.

Much of the argument of Dido's free will revolves around how much power one seems to think that the gods have on the human characters in Virgil's epic. Fate, it is hard to dispute, is the power above all else in *The Aeneid* as well as in other classical epics, yet fate is not what determined Dido's end—this was brought about by the influence of Cupid. After analyzing Dido's journey from respected ruler to love-sick suicide, it appears that examples of what could be considered her own independent choices are, but for a single instance, entirely lacking—that one instance being the curse she places on Rome. This essay will focus its analysis on four major scenarios to discuss this point: 1) the initial meeting of Dido and Aeneas, 2) the cave scene where they physically enact their love for each other, 3) Dido's suicide, and 4) the curse she declares shortly before her suicide. Before beginning with the analysis of Dido, however, one must begin with the gods themselves to have a necessary groundwork.

As partially discussed above, looking at gods as merely representatives of strong emotion makes little sense within the confines of the story itself. The gods have real power; they are real characters who bring about real effects, and their direct influence often overrules any personal resistance on the side of the human. To blame Dido for her mental deterioration is like blaming a madman, made so by being knocked on the head with a bat, for making poor life decisions. She is driven mad with passion by a god, and it is to such an extreme degree that it should be considered more obsession than love.

With this in mind, there is an important difference one should make between passion of the common (though not un-powerful) sort, and passion of the divine sort. This difference, though important to the matter at hand, is not always acknowledged. Dido's specific instance is an example of what could be considered divine indoctrination. Yet, even if one assumes that a natural kind of passion is all it takes to bring about Dido's tragic end, it is still inaccurate to say that passion existed within Dido at her initial meeting with Aeneas.

In his analysis of *The Aeneid*, George Duckworth mentions the idea of "double causation." This means that when a god influences a mortal, the blame belongs to both the god or goddess, who fanned the flame, and the human whose heart ignited the emotional spark in the first place (358). Duckworth argues:

Divine motivation is present as part of the epic tradition, but what the god or goddess usually does is merely to accentuate or inflame a state of mind already eager to do what the deity wishes. In other words, the action of the god in a sense externalizes the sentiments of the character and brings them to a decisive fulfillment... Cupid in [Book I of *The Aeneid*], disguised as Ascanius, contributes to the awakening of Dido's love, but the divine intervention seems hardly necessary; Dido's admiration of Aeneas, the similarity of their experiences, and her growing interest as he tells the story of his adventures would explain her attitude and the conflict in her mind at the beginning of [Book IV]. (358)

Duckworth brings up a number of good points in his analysis of how much free will human characters have in *The Aeneid*. He even admits that earlier in the work Aeneas being forced away from Dido by the message of Mercury is an example of conflicting wills between men and gods, but his particular point fails to be completely satisfactory when considering Dido (357-58). He infers Dido's admiration as a spark of attraction before Cupid ever gets involved, without necessarily admitting that it is in fact only an inference; Virgil gives no acceptable description of Dido's initial reaction to Aeneas to reveal that she is infatuated with him,

though many have inferred the point for themselves. She marvels at him, yes, as well as relates to his suffering, but that is all that is mentioned (Book I, 734-752). To go from marvel to attraction is not an improbable chain of events, but it never actually gets there before Cupid is “blotting out the memory of Sychaeus [her previous husband]” bit by bit and inflaming her heart with passion (I, 861).

Virgil even states at the end of this stanza that Cupid tries “to seize with a fresh, living love / a heart at rest for long—long numb to passion” (I, 862-63). How can a heart, until that moment numb to passion, feel true infatuation with Aeneas at that moment? Interestingly enough, it doesn’t seem like she can. It doesn’t look so much like Cupid is “externalizing the sentiments of Dido and bringing them to decisive fulfillment,” as it does that Cupid is shifting the sentiments altogether. It’s not a tame passion growing bright; it’s one feeling being turned into another; it’s a stone being remolded as a heart, to then be filled to overflowing with Cupid’s wine. At the beginning of her and Aeneas’s relationship, there is no evidence that Dido was anything but an unwilling puppet with strings leading up to (or in this case down to) a conniving god’s influence.

Marilynn Desmond describes Dido’s feelings for Aeneas quite accurately as “amorous enslavement” (30). Desmond is admittedly more concerned with the literary understanding of Dido rather than her as a character explicitly in *The Aeneid*. She speaks about Dido in mostly distant terms, looking at how Virgil might have intended her to be received by a Roman audience, expounding on her orientalism and sexuality as a negative embodiment, very similar to how they viewed Cleopatra. However, this essay focuses on Dido as a human character rather than as an idea. How the Roman audience might have taken Dido is not the concern in this essay, though it is worth pointing out that Virgil certainly intended her to be sympathetic to the reader.

If one accepts that Dido was forcibly ignited with a passion for Aeneas, and that the passion is of divine nature, which cripples her reason almost to the point of nonexistence, this largely rules out any notion of free will during the famous cave

scene as well. However, due to this scene's notoriously obscure nature, it warrants a closer analysis. In regard to this subject, Desmond writes:

The indeterminacy of the cave scene emblematically enacts the larger narrative uncertainties of the text. Dido's conviction that she has experienced a wedding receives support from the deities' outspoken intentions to delude her into such a belief; indeed, Juno straightforwardly states her intention to produce a real wedding. Dido's misinterpretation of the scene is perhaps willful, but not without corroborating evidence, especially given Aeneas's behavior. (29)

Desmond is rather supportive of the idea that Dido is not to blame for her belief that she and Aeneas are married after their initial intercourse. Willful delusion, while an allowable defense for Dido's free will, dives into the nature of subconscious decisions, which is textually impossible to argue completely—it's based entirely on theoretical ideas of who Dido is. Plus, considering her delusion is brought about by the direct influence of "Juno, Queen of Marriage," it would be somewhat inadequate to argue that Dido saw through the charade in any real sense (Book IV, 209).

Now comes the matter of Dido's suicide. A large piece of evidence in deciding where the true blame lies for this act is to be found in the following excerpt: "Since she was dying a death not fated or deserved, / no, tormented, before her day, in a blaze of passion— / Proserpina had yet to pluck a golden lock from her head / and commit her life to the Styx and the dark world below" (Book IV, 866-869). A death not fated could provide evidence either way, considering both men and gods have been known to cause ripples not determined by fate, but Virgil provides clues directly after for who is to blame. It reads that she was "tormented...in a blaze of passion" (867). The Latin reads "*sed misera ante diem, subitoque accensa furore,*" which roughly translates as "But misery came before her day, to come under a passionate fury [or madness]." This only goes to show that it is not an error in translation, but that this line in its original language

implies that even her suicide was brought about unjustly by another's hand.

The last possibility, the last and most probable hope that Dido is not wholly and completely a puppet of divine whim, is found in the curse that she enacts on the Roman race that is destined to descend from Aeneas. She defiantly screams shortly before killing herself, "...this is my curse—war between all / our peoples, all their children, endless war!" (Book IV, 783-84). Because the curse prophesies Hannibal and the Punic Wars, we know it works; there is power in her final action; it incites divine interference, enacting vengeful justice for "tragic Dido" (Book IV, 566). That her death was not fated also means that neither were the Punic Wars fated—it's textually impossible to infer. This means her curse is entirely her own. Her inability to fight the passions forced upon her or prevent the unalterable destiny of Aeneas enslaves her, but she is not entirely a victim of forced will. She can't change the fate of Aeneas, but vengeance is hers nonetheless. The act of war itself satisfies her desire—there is no real need for complete victory. Animosity between peoples is what she wants, and that is what she gets. She may not be able to change the course of the river which Fate has mapped out, but in the end she calls on divine powers to allow her at least one sincere act of true will. So, when the terrifying Hannibal brought unexpected death and destruction to the streets of Rome, when Roman and Tyrian blood mingled into an ocean of red, Dido's awful and willful curse was fulfilled. From this point of view, only one can be blamed for enacting this curse—no god makes her do it (though they allow the curse to be fulfilled), and no other power deludes her into believing that vengeance on Aeneas and his descendants is the choice to make; it is Dido alone that makes that choice, and both a graceful tragedy and a solemn victory resides in that fact.

Dido's life, as portrayed in *The Aeneid*, can inspire many different reactions from the reader. One is often tempted to blame her because she is related, in one's mind, to a more generalized refusal to take responsibility for one's own actions. On the other side of the spectrum, there are those who can empathize with Dido's helplessness, and they respond sympathetically, perhaps

recognizing her apparent powerlessness in themselves. Both points of view are valid, and can reflect the reader's own experiences and sympathies of the wider world around them. Yet, when looking at Dido, not as a projection of one's own beliefs, but as a real character in her own right, she stands revealed as a woman who, by no fault of her own, was chained to an imminent and unnecessary tragedy. This makes her singular act of free will something unique. We can celebrate her rebellion or condemn it. The one thing we cannot do, in the context of Virgil's epic, is to deny that free will did indeed have its moment (as fleeting as it was) in the life of Dido, and that in the midst of her forced tragedy, her decision caused that colossal event which brought the Roman world to its knees.

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## THE IMPORTANCE OF MORPHOLOGY

by Valerie McIntosh

As a Block 1 student in the Elementary Education program, I have opportunities to work in the field, assisting and observing elementary students and experienced teachers. In a second-grade classroom I am working in, they are learning the following prefixes: un-, pre-, dis-, and re-. The cooperating teacher who served as my mentor defined the term *prefix* as “a group of letters placed before a word that changes the meaning.” With these prefixes, the students are doing word work independently as well as engaging in whole-group activities. Although they have been observed learning prefixes, some students are struggling to understand how words they have previously learned can change meaning so quickly by simply adding a few letters.

Reading and pronouncing words is only half of the battle. Understanding and comprehending the meaning of words is a crucial part of reading development. People use decoding skills every day to break apart words based on other words they already know. Knowing what the word *time* means does not necessarily indicate that the person would know what the word *timeliness* means. Mastery of the root word helps, but grasping the whole word requires deciphering the meaning of each part. This concept of breaking apart words is called *morphology*. For all students, learning morphology is vital to reading development and is a concept that will be exceptionally beneficial for the rest of their lives.

Morphological awareness is useful for all students. Tong, Deacon, Kirby, Cain, and Parrila (2011) specify, “morphological

awareness refers to individuals' 'conscious awareness of the morphemic structure of words and their ability to reflect on and manipulate that structure'" (p. 523). Morphological awareness skills correlate to reading and cognition in many ways; for example, a higher morphological awareness leads to proficient reading comprehension and vocabulary for learners. According to Winkler (2012), "Morphology is the field of linguistics that studies the structure of words and their components. All words are made up of one or more parts that have meaning."

A *derivational morpheme* is a bound (cannot stand alone) morpheme that changes the meaning or part of speech of a word; in this specific example, it is changing the meaning to negative. There are also *inflectional morphemes* that give grammatical information. Giving an example from Table 2, the word "unsure" has a derivational morpheme that changes the meaning of the word to "not." It is important to understand each of these morphemes because they can result in various meanings when added to different words

The following question may arise: why teach morphology? Early reading instruction and morphology are connected by a direct link. Reutzel and Cooter (2015) argue that "When children first enter preschool, they are still developing morphological understanding. Word study is critical in the early years (pre-K through second grade) and is strongly related to early word reading ability. Word study lays the groundwork for all elementary reading and becomes even more important through students' secondary schooling" (p. 34).

Aside from this evidence supporting teaching morphology, the concept is also integrated into the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts and Language. Morphology is addressed in each grade level; CCSS connections take place in grades K-12.

CCSS: Language Standards Correlations (Table 1)

Kindergarten	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	12 <sup>th</sup> Grade
<p>L K.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple meaning words and phrases based on <i>kindergarten reading and content</i>.</p>	<p>L 4.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple meaning words and phrases based on <i>grade 4 reading and content</i>.</p>	<p>L 8.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on <i>grade 8 reading and content</i>, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.</p>	<p>L 12.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on <i>grades 11-12 reading and content</i>, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.</p>
<p>b. Use the most frequently-occurring inflections and affixes (e.g., -ed, -s, re-, un-, pre-, ful, -less) as a clue to the meaning of an unknown word</p>	<p>b. Use common, grade-appropriate Greek and Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., telegraph, photograph, autograph).</p>	<p>b. Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., precede, recede, secede).</p>	<p>b. Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech (e.g., conceive, conception, conceivable).</p>

(National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010)

Similarly, Hickey and Lewis (2013) provide examples of vocabulary use and standards for grades K-12. By the kindergarten level, students should be able to “Use the most frequently occurring inflections and affixes (e.g., -ed, -s, re-, un-, pre-, -ful, -less) as a clue to the meaning of an unknown word.” Jumping to a fourth-grade reading content level, as stated in Table 1, students should be able to “Use common, grade-appropriate

Greek and Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., telegraph, photograph, autograph)” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

Embedding the strategy of morphological awareness sets the stage for the rest of a student’s life. This skill is particularly useful when students are transitioning into reading in order to learn information (content knowledge) instead of learning to read. This information is not commonly known by native English speakers, and failing to understand this strategy can result in hindering reading skills for life.

For native speakers of English, it is unnatural to decode morphemes. Morphology is a skill that has to be explicitly taught and practiced. Winkler (2012) states a significant point about multiple prefixes using the same function: “Un- is not the only prefix that performs the same function. Think of all the other prefixes that we use to mean not: *dis-* (disappear), *il-* (illogical), *im-* (impossible) and *in-* (incorrect)” (p. 113). Confusing morpheme combinations can be hard to move past for developing readers. Winkler (2012) adds, “Second language speakers of English often struggle with this aspect of morphology in English because there seem to be a number of suffixes or prefixes that have the same function and no simple rule for them to follow in choosing which one is correct” (pp. 113-14). If morphemes are unclear for developing native English-speaking students, it will be tough for ESL students to fully comprehend each meaning.

Hickey and Lewis (2013) state, “We call morphemes that are words free morphemes because they can be used unattached” (p. 71). In Table 2, that is what the root morpheme would be. For example, in Table 2, *small* is the free morpheme for the complete word *smaller*; *-er* is the bound morpheme that gives the information that it is comparative. Students who learn this rule will obtain reading skills much faster than students who are not morphologically aware. Morphological awareness is needed as soon as learners start to speak and read, however, the intensity of this awareness increases and develops as the student moves through grade levels.

*The Heart and the Bottle Morphology (Table 2)*

Word	Root Morpheme	Derivational Morpheme(s)	Function of Derivational Morpheme(s)	Inflectional Morpheme(s)	Function of Inflectional Morpheme(s)
Curiosities	Curious	-ity	Adjective to a Noun	-es	Plural
Finding	Find			-ing	Present participle
Unsure	Sure	Un-	Change meaning "Not"		
Occurred	Occur			-ed	Past participle
Smaller	Small			-er	Comparative

This academic change in morphological awareness can sometimes be difficult for developing readers and can cause what is called a "fourth grade slump." Latin and Greek root words, when first introduced, can be complicated to grasp. Studies show that after Latin and Greek roots are introduced, (e.g., photograph, precede, autograph) children that have never been recognized as struggling readers can fall behind. Tong, et al. (2011), referring to children who do not show identifiable deficits until Grade 4 or 5, state that, "These children with late-emerging reading disabilities demonstrate weakness in either word-level reading or text comprehension, or both" (p. 523). Teaching morphology requires intensive planning and detailed instruction. Using the students' first language can be an advantage to learning morphology and a substantial resource for the teacher to use for comparison (Hickey and Lewis, 2013).

Overall, learning morphology is the base of reading development and it is a concept that will always be vital to learning and comprehension. Morphological awareness is the first step to learning morphology, and studies support a link "between morphological awareness and children's success in reading comprehension" (Tong, et al, 2011, p. 524). Morphemes can be complex and require thorough explanations for complete cognition of the words. Multiple morphemes can have the same

meaning, for example, so knowing how to decipher morphemes is crucial. Introducing new root words can be complicated for students and cause inadequate reading development, which is why it is important for teachers to provide detailed guidance in the life-long processes of learning morphology.

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## CONSENT AND COURTLY LOVE: MORE THAN A “YES” OR “NO” QUESTION

*by Savannah Molyneaux*

The idea of sexual consent is one that is propagated in modern culture frequently, in both literature and the media. Just as current literature is telling of society's views on relationships and sexuality, literature of the past is just as informative. The literature of the medieval period marks the development of a love phenomenon in their culture known as “courtly love.” Courtly love refers to the type of heterosexual romantic relationship where the male suffers from love for a woman and pursues her, attempting to woo and later marry her (Andreas 28). One scholar defines a commonplace situation in courtly love as when a “male lover claims or appears to suffer physically from lovesickness, wounding, or other corporeal dysfunction, all of which lead to more generalized helplessness; [...] and beautiful body of the lady alone holds the power to fulfill the lover's wish and heal his ailments” (Burns 32). Andreas Capellanus refers to the suffering in love in his manual to courtly love, stating, “That love is suffering is easy to see, for before the love becomes equally balanced on both sides there is no torment greater, since lover is always in fear that his love may not gain its desire and that he is wasting his efforts” (28). Thus, courtly love is a “suffering” that a man endures in order to obtain a woman, despite his fear that he is “wasting his efforts.” However, it is notable to point out the absence of one crucial aspect in any type of sexual and romantic relationship: consent. The absence of consent from writings on courtly love is evident through the portrayal of women's roles in

society, the sense of entitlement to women's bodies, and the dismissal of rape, thereby showing the influence of a society's rape culture on their notions of sexual consent as seen through their literature.

The concept of consent has changed throughout history, depending on the location and time period. The current notion of consent in Canada, for example, is defined in a law review as the following:

Canadian law requires affirmative sexual consent to all sexual activity, not merely between strangers. Sexual consent is defined as the communication, by words or conduct, of "voluntary agreement" to a specific sexual activity, with a specific person. Agreement must be expressed and "voluntary" to be legally effective. "When it's not 'YES!' and voluntary, it's 'NO!'" and "When it's 'NO!' it's 'NO!'" (Vandervort 146)

This definition refers to a "voluntary agreement," to a specific activity, as the marker for consent. It also places specific guidelines on what constitutes consent and how consent can be proven "legally effective" in the court of law. This last aspect is especially relevant in rape cases. While this is how consent is defined in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in medieval literature, issues that involved the concept of consent were addressed, although it was not directly named as such. A law review of medieval legal cases provides a basis for the influence of courtly love on consent in relationships, stating, "According to the precedent, love and marriage are mutually exclusive [...] married partners are forced to comply with each other's desires as an obligation, and under no circumstances to refuse their persons to each other" (Goodrich 633). This shows the legal basis for lack of consent, as partners were "obligated" and "forced" to comply to each other's wishes, never able to "refuse." This legal basis of the medieval period exemplifies the problem with the lack of established consent in their literature and society. These legal establishments of consent or lack thereof are important to consider when analyzing aspects of consent in the medieval literature.

The portrayal of women in medieval culture through texts on courtly love is also visible in the aforementioned legal basis in medieval law. There are several notable texts whose portrayal of women and courtly love provide basis for the lack of established consent. One notable text that is charged with creating the term “courtly love” is Chrétien de Troyes’ version of *Lancelot*, where medievalist Gaston Paris used “courtly love” to characterize the relationship between Lancelot and Guinevere (Burns 28). Chrétien de Troyes was a prominent medieval writer whose texts heavily influenced literary culture. His Lancelot is a man tormented by courtly love as well; Chrétien writes, “The Knight of the Cart was lost in thought, a man with no strength or defense against love, which torments him. His thoughts were so deep that he forgot who he was; he was uncertain whether or not he truly existed” (683). Lancelot’s love for Guinevere is so severe that it “torments him” and he even “forgot who he was,” which are both characteristics of courtly love.

However, this torment and suffering that a woman “forces” a man to endure in courtly love also comes at a cost to her. Andreas Capellanus, another prominent medieval writer, is most well-known for his book *The Art of Courtly Love*, which serves as a manual for both men and women in engaging courtly love. In this book, Andreas Capellanus declares that a woman is “unfaithful” if she does not deliver her promises after the suffering she has caused. He states, “We believe we must firmly hold that when a woman has granted any man the hope of her love [...] and she finds him not unworthy of this love, it is very wrong for her to try to deprive him of the love he has so long hoped for” (166). Thus, the woman is ridiculed for “depriving” a man of the love he wants, even if she is no longer interested. This notion of courtly love is especially problematic when analyzing this “rule” with the idea of sex and consent. This courtly love principle begs the question of whether it is also wrong for a woman to deprive the man of the sex he was hoping to obtain. Andreas is asserting that the woman’s consent to whatever the man means by “love” is no longer necessary, as she has consented simply by “granting” him hope. One scholar writes of Andreas’ text, “Male suitors who

implore ladies to reciprocate their love in fictive dialogues ask repeatedly for the hope and encouragement that will lead eventually to their 'deserved recompense' their 'sweet reward.' Ladies who refuse the love suit will be held accountable for the lover's inevitable demise" (Burns 34). Not only are women not free to say "no," which is a valuable part of consent, they are blamed for the "demise" of the lover. Therefore, the portrayal of women as the instigators of male suffering means that they are not granted the right to reject any man, nor are they granted the opportunity to even offer consent.

Another aspect of courtly love that influences the cultural portrayal of women in medieval literature is the medieval concept *fin'amor*. One scholar defines *fin'amor*, writing:

[*Fin'amor*] abides where a man and woman experience mutual erotic passion (one of the "two desires") which is controlled by the emotion of love guided by right reason or whole thinking (the second desire)... This is how, as later troubadours liked to claim, *fin'amor* makes a lover a better person. Without this exercise of virtue, *fin'amor* cannot abide and *fals'amor* is the inevitable result. (Taylor 68)

This notion of *fin'amor* further develops the concept of courtly love as it describes the "erotic passion" between a man and a woman, and the connection between this passion and morality and virtue. Because *fin'amor* is believed to make a lover "a better person," it then follows why a woman would be blamed for not reciprocating feelings or rejecting a male's advances, as she would be hindering the development of virtue according to this concept. The driving passion behind *fin'amor* is also what leads the male to relentlessly pursue the woman without accepting a rejection. Murray notes in the work *Laiistic* by Marie de France, "he refuses to relent until he receives satisfaction" (3) as the man pursues his neighbor's wife. In Marie de France, the neighbor "refuses to relent" as he "begged and sued so persistently" (*Laiistic* 1.24). Courtly love suggests that begging a woman until one obtains the woman is appropriate and shows the suitor's dedication to the woman, as seen through the concept *fin'amor* and the mention of

such in various pieces of literature, like *Laüstic* or *The Art of Courtly Love*. Thus, the promotion of *fin'amor* in medieval culture is what led people, and specifically men, to be guided by their emotions and drive for love.

One of the most problematic aspects regarding consent in courtly love is the men's sense of entitlement to women's bodies. One prominent instance of this is in Marie de France's *Guigemar*. Sir Guigemar has just been reunited with his lover with the help of Meriadu, who was also interested in her. Meriadu was angry when he could not untie her belt, and after Sir Guigemar was reunited with her, Meriadu asserted that he was not finished. Meriadu said, "I found her. I shall have her, too" (*Guigemar* l.851). His assertion that he "shall" have her because he was the first one to find her, despite her never consenting, is telling of the male entitlement of courtly love. Meriadu never asked the lady what she wanted; he simply asserted that he should have a turn because he was the first one to find her. This treatment of sex as a reward for a win or a rescue is not unique to this text either. In Chrétien's *Lancelot*, the text states:

And should he assault her, he would be forever disgraced at every court. But if she were being escorted by another, and the knight chose to battle with her defender and defeated him at arms, then he might do with her as he pleased without incurring dishonor or disgrace. (224)

Thus, if another knight were to win the battle, he could "do with her as he pleased," meaning he could rape her, and he would face no repercussions, such as losing his honor. This shows that according to the courtly love ideology, males were entitled to women's bodies simply through winning them. There is an absence of consent on the women's part, as it is not mentioned in these texts how the women feel about these arbitrary courtly love rules.

The actual treatment of rape in medieval texts is the most problematic, as it either ignores the occurrence altogether, or it shifts the focus to the man that is "rescuing" the woman from the rape. For example, in many of the aforementioned texts, it is

evident that rape would have ensued, had the man not been there to “rescue” the woman. In the case of *Guigemar*, if Meriadu had been able to undo the knot, he would have had sex with her because he claimed he had found her first, so he had to “have her” (L. 851). This begs the question of whether this intercourse would have been consensual, had he been able to untie the knot. However, the text never addresses the possibility of what would have ensued; instead, it shifts the focus to her true lover, Sir Guigemar, who rescued her and battled Meriadu for her honor. Another prime example is in *Lancelot*, where Lancelot rescues a girl that he witnesses is about to be raped (221). Immediately after Lancelot rescues her, she takes him back into her bedroom to have sex with him to repay him for saving her, as well as to honor his prior commitment to her (*Lancelot* 222). This immediate shift from almost being raped to attempting to have sex with Lancelot shows again the idea that sex is a prize for men. This instance also shows the previously mentioned shift from the rape to the heroic man who saves her. One scholar, E. Jane Burns, notes this shift in attention, stating:

tales of love in Arthurian romance [...] mask sexual violence against women in the form of rape, attempted rape, and forced marriage. Courtly love in these literary contexts aestheticizes and thus prettifies forced sex against women by deftly shifting our attention from the female victim to the chivalric hero who rescues her. (38)

Burns illustrates the shift in these texts as efforts of courtly love “prettif[ying] forced sex.” While the term “rape” was used in these medieval texts, the idea of consent and what constitutes rape is never fully discussed; instead, the “chivalric” actions of the story’s protagonist are the focus, masking pertinent women’s issues of the time in favor of glorifying men. This results in consent being absent from the discussion of courtly love ideology and women being raped but never showing how to cope without a hero.

The concept of consent is one that is not specifically mentioned in most medieval literature, especially texts regarding courtly love. However, this does not mean that the issue was not

indirectly addressed, such as in texts when rape occurred. More importantly, the culture of courtly love created its own form of rape culture, as it portrayed women as objects for men's obsession and prizes for men to win. These ideals show that there was an alarming absence of concern for obtaining women's permission to engage in such activities. On the other hand, it is also important to note that the concept of consent has developed and evolved over time, so expecting the same ideas about consent to be present in medieval literature is not possible. Regardless, the absence of consent in courtly love sheds light on the priorities of writers in the medieval period as they wrote about relationships and their own notions of love.

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# A FRAMEWORK FOR PROTEST: REFUSING SOCIAL INHERITANCE THROUGH SELF- REVELATION

*by Sarah Redding*

There are many opposing visions of what protest looks like. Is protest loud and active like a march? Silent and inactive like a sit-in? Is it colorful and public like a work of art or a parade? Is protest somber like a vigil? This variety of definitions demonstrates that protest is complicated and avoids a singular characterization. Works from writers and musicians, such as James Baldwin's open letter "My Dungeon Shook" (1963), Audre Lorde's essay "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action" (1977), Nina Simone's song "Four Woman" (1966), and Gloria Anzaldúa's essay "Haciendo caras, una entrada" (1990) protest similarly varied, but often intersecting, forms of oppression including racism, sexism, and homophobia. Despite the complexity of oppression and protest, my synthesized reading of these works reveals a framework for protest that begins by examining one's social inheritance, requires extensive introspection and reclamation of personal identity, and works to redistribute power and privilege.

Understanding that one's social standing is inherited is the first step in protesting personal oppression and the oppression of others. James Baldwin's open letter "My Dungeon Shook," conceived as a personal letter addressed to his nephew, explores the generational "passing-down" of power and oppression. The

letter begins with descriptions of the similarities between the other men of the Baldwin family and his nephew, his namesake. But the nephew James has inherited more than just a name or personality traits; as a black man, he is part of a group that “has functioned in the white man’s world as a fixed star, as an immovable pillar: and as he moves out of his place, heaven and earth are shaken to their foundations” (23). The “white man’s world” is the social architecture reliant on the oppression of others that shelters its owners. Like a home, this social architecture is passed from one generation to the next until, as Baldwin implies, the foundation shifts. This racist social structure built on the backs of black people, shakes and crumbles when the foundation moves or the point of reference, “the fixed star,” moves out of place. By refusing to be the bedrock of someone else’s social inheritance, the oppressed can crumble the system and reclaim themselves, thereby creating a new inheritance.

This refusal of one’s social inheritance and the reclamation of the self, as Audre Lorde’s essay “Transformation of Silence into Action and Language” suggests, is a difficult personal journey. Protest as “an act of self-revelation” requires us to recognize “the mockeries of separations that have been imposed on us and which so often we accept as our own” (42-43). Seeing the structure and our place in it is easy, but recognizing that divisions between groups of people are impositions rather than natural states of being is extremely difficult. Before we can destroy the social structures that refuse the oppressed an equitable inheritance, we must recognize how we have internalized untrue ideas about ourselves and others. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the individual to examine and question their place in the hierarchy—both how they’ve benefited and been harmed by it—especially in relation to others. This detailed introspection has the power to reveal the differences between who we really are and what ideas about ourselves “have been imposed upon us.” The effect of self-revelation is to reject the inherited and internalized social norms and to step out of one’s place in the structure, which enables us to recognize and protest the oppression enacted upon ourselves and others.

For Gloria Anzaldúa, the act of self-revelation is a reclamation of the physical body, particularly the face, in order to make one's true identity visible:

"Face" is the surface of the body that is the most noticeably inscribed by social structures, marked with instructions on how to be *mujer*, *macho*, working class, Chicana...[but] we women of color strip off the *mascaras* others have imposed on us, see through the disguises we hide behind and drop our *personas* so that we may become subjects in our own discourses. (xv-xvi)

The inscriptions that the individual wears are "instructions," identities imposed on us by social structures that are inherited and internalized over our lifetimes. However, these inscriptions are neither natural nor a part of a person's true identity; they exist only at a surface level and can be peeled away like a mask. Using these masks to present multiple identities and selves can be a means of protection from the effects of racism and sexism. In casting off the mask and the internalized oppressions by refusing dominant society's expectations, women of color make visible their true identities. With this newly claimed visibility, women of color "may become subjects in their...discourses," or use their experiences to help others reclaim identity and visibility.

Nina Simone's song "Four Women" does the work of reclamation that Lorde and Anzaldúa call for by responding to the "as yet unwritten history of the [black] woman," a history reliant on misrepresenting and underrepresenting black women ("Nobody Knows My Name" 117). The song provides varying physical and social descriptions of each individual followed by the repetition of the line "What do they call me?" in each stanza: the four voices then respond with some variation of "My name is..." (Simone). The emphasis on what "they"—those in the dominant, white, male culture—call each woman reveals an understanding and awareness of the influence of social structures on individual identity. The speakers understand that white American society identifies them from an outsider perspective that is grounded in both physical and familial markers, the masks that society can see. But the song implies that the four women

have a self-awareness outside this social inheritance. No one responds with "they call me..." but instead asserts that "My name is..." Thus, their individual and collective histories as well as their inherited social characteristics have informed their identities. However, each makes a claim for her own name, her own voice, and her own self-conception. Simone's song is the medium through which the four women vocalize their histories and identities: they protest being relegated by a silent or unpublished existence as physical object or familial function in the white- and male-dominated culture.

Baldwin, Lorde, Anzaldúa, and Simone show us that protest is a difficult personal process that must begin with honest introspection and examination of our individual places in the white- and male-dominated culture. We must recognize our standing in the hierarchal structure we've inherited, honestly assess how we have been sheltered and harmed by this inheritance, and transform our identities so that we may help others discover their own. This process of protest culminates in use of our reclaimed bodies, voices, and visibilities to refuse our inequitable inheritances and work to redistribute power and privilege more fairly.

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MAKE AFRICA GREAT AGAIN:  
MASCULINITY AND CULTURE IN CHINUA  
ACHEBE'S *THINGS FALL APART*

by *Madison Rippy*

Postcolonial writers personify the country as an individual, and those individual's flaws represent what the country is struggling with politically. As Fredric Jameson states in his "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," "the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of...the public third-world culture and society" (69). Jameson argues that "Third-World" literature presents itself as "national allegories" because of the political and economic situations postcolonial authors and their countries find themselves in. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* provides an example of this theory. *Things Fall Apart* also represents Frantz Fanon's theory on national culture. He states that "a national culture is not a folklore, nor an abstract populism...a national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people..." (210). Fanon asserts that dictators or leaders cannot create a national culture based on the beliefs of the past to justify their rule. These beliefs originate from outdated notions of masculinity and war that leaders manipulate to their advantage. However, these theories, especially Jameson's, create problems of their own by oversimplifying African and other "Third-World" countries into one general and simplistic category. Aijaz Ahmad states that the problem with Jameson's theory is that "there are hundreds of nationalisms in Asia and Africa today; some are progressive, others are not" (8). He asserts that Jameson's strict

ternary of first, second, and third “worlds” unfairly characterizes those “Third-World” countries as struggling even if they are extremely similar to “First-World” countries.

Keeping this flaw in mind, the characters within this novel personify not only the national allegories of Jameson but the results of Fanon’s theory of populism. *Things Fall Apart* takes place in precolonial Africa and centers around the character of Okonkwo. He holds an esteemed position within Umuofia, the village where he and his family live. He grew up under an irresponsible father and strove to surpass his father’s reputation. Okonkwo is extremely hard with his family, especially his eldest son, Nwoye, and holds them to almost impossible standards. The story progresses with the introduction of white missionaries and circumstances that force the family to leave Umuofia for seven years. The novel ends with Okonkwo killing a messenger from the missionaries and committing suicide because he cannot handle how Umuofia changed. Achebe lived through the fall of colonialism and the rise of Nigerian and various African military dictatorships. He lends credence to Jameson’s theory when he writes his novel concurrent to Africa’s politics. Achebe also argues Fanon’s point in his novel and adds that cultural influences are important to the national culture, even if that influence comes from the previous colonial power. Chinua Achebe uses Okonkwo’s perception of masculinity to criticize post-colonial African politics and the solutions presented to eradicate its cultural influence on current African culture.

### **Dictatorships and Nationalist Groups: Masculinity in African Politics**

Okonkwo’s obsession with masculinity and dealing with problems through brute force alludes to the rise of military dependent governments. Nigeria in particular suffered from patrimonial military regimes. Patrimonial forms of government allow the leader to have direct control of everything that takes place in the country (Ikpe 147). Examples of this type of government are absolute monarchy and dictatorships, both of which derive their power from their control of the military.

Dictatorships established themselves throughout Africa after the “independence” from the colonial powers. Okonkwo is Achebe’s representation of those military dictatorships. He writes Okonkwo as a great warrior and wrestler who embodies all Umuofian and precolonial African ideals of masculinity to convey that those ideals are not necessarily the best for a blossoming country to have. With this intentional literary representation, Achebe purposefully chose a feminine tradition for Okonkwo to disobey. Okonkwo religiously follows traditions that are masculine such as farming, participating as an *egwugwu*, and earning titles. The Week of Peace is held in honor of the Earth goddess Ani and, as such, is feminine. Okonkwo beat his wife; therefore, he broke the rules of the Week of Peace (Achebe 29). Kwadwo Osei-Nyame states that *Things Fall Apart* “re-enacts phases of the precolonial and colonial traditional order of African history by featuring the beginnings of some significant moments of nationalist ideological crises” and goes on to explain that “masculine traditions operate as forms of consciousness that act foremostly to legitimize specific ideals and values” (150). Nationalist groups handpick the traditions that they want to follow instead of following every precolonial tradition. Osei-Nyame refers to those same nationalist groups in Africa that cling to precolonial ideals of masculinity as a way to redefine Africa in the aftermath of colonialism. These nationalist groups often use the predominantly patrimonial way that precolonial Africans organized their societies to justify their reasoning for dictatorships and military regimes. Nationalist groups that support the patrimonial way that precolonial Africa was organized will only want to follow traditions that support this way of governing. A Week of Peace, for example, would not be picked to continue in the present day because it prevents any sort of violent action. Military dictatorships gain their power through the threat of violent action. The tradition and how a dictator wants to run the country do not align; therefore, the tradition is left in the past as if it never existed in the first place. This denial of traditions directly ties to Fanon and his theory: a national culture comes from the experiences of the people and not the

manipulation of a few. The nationalist groups sacrifice culture in order to keep power, which contradicts their declared purpose of national unity.

Even more, Achebe uses Okonkwo to represent other aspects of dictatorships such as their impermanence. Okonkwo is a deeply respected member of Umuofia's nine villages. Although not a direct leader of the villages, his opinion matters because of his high status and reputation. Okonkwo is the firmest in upholding the traditions of Umuofia. Ernest Champion states that *Things Fall Apart* is "a story about a man and his people. A man who is inflexible, driven by an obsession to uphold a way of life in which he has an abiding faith. This inflexibility runs counter to the flexibility of a system more prone to change and less authoritarian, a society in which the seeds of change are inherent" (273). Okonkwo's people are already starting to turn away from the strict traditions of the past. However, his influence starts to wane as the white missionaries become increasingly relevant to the villages. If Okonkwo represents dictatorship or just a dictator, then the white missionaries represent the same. Much like someone garnering power to overthrow the current government, the white missionaries offer those discriminated against in the tribe, such as the *osus* (outcasts) or the twins, a new way of life that will be better for them. The institution scorned many people in order to raise others, and those people are easy to convert to a new leadership that will benefit them better than the last one. The more the white missionaries integrate themselves into the structure of Umuofia, the less influence that tradition, and consequently Okonkwo, have in Umuofia. Okonkwo claims that declaring war is the only way to deal with the missionaries. He wishes to deal with them like they had dealt with their enemies in the past. However, most of the village does not believe that going to war is the option that Umuofia should choose. Okonkwo realizes this when he kills the head messenger. "He [Okonkwo] knew that Umuofia would not go to war...they had broken into tumult instead of action" (Achebe 205). Only when his perception and the reality of the situation contradict each other does he discern the attitude of Umuofia. He is subsequently deposed of his influence on the villages. Corresponding to their literary

depiction, the popular attitude of the people can depose dictators. Achebe uses Okonkwo's removal from influence to exhibit that the impermanence and ease of deposing of military dictatorships is not a stable form of government. A country that is learning how to self-govern after the effects of colonialism needs stability that military dictatorships will not be able to give.

On the other hand, Achebe uses Okonkwo to portray military dictatorships' rashness and willingness to go to war. Okonkwo is a great warrior for Umuofia, but his ideologies for war often cross the line. Many disagree with him and think that war with the white missionaries is unwise or unnecessary. Okonkwo, in his blind bloodlust, acts for Umuofia but is wrong in his action. He is characterized in *Things Fall Apart* as "not a man of thought but of action" (Achebe 69). Achebe chooses this wording very deliberately. In the political world, a "man of action" is often seen as a good or necessary thing. However, this description is superficially attractive when related with dictators. In this case, a "man of action" correlates to a man of rashness. Kidane Mengisteab states that "one of the most conspicuous characteristics of the African political landscape is the proto-colonial nature of the postcolonial" (28). Independence of the African states transferred the power from colonial to native. However, this independence was littered with what Mengisteab calls the predatory "political elite" (28). The elite are the dictators. These dictators continue the colonial traditions and change nothing for the general populace of their countries. The only thing that matters is what they want. Unlike Okonkwo, dictators rarely have a higher authority to answer to. There is no filter for their whims and desires. If they wish to wage war, they will wage war. Umuofia is able to keep from warring with the white missionaries because Okonkwo is not the singular authority that decides what is best for the villages. If Okonkwo were the dictator of Umuofia, his rashness would bring about the end of the villages because of the disparity in weapon technology as the annihilation of Abame demonstrates (Achebe 139). Okonkwo also personifies dictators' willingness to wage war despite the consequences for their people. He believes the wrong done to Umuofia must be undone

through warfare and not peaceful negotiation. He is aware of the superior weapons of the white colonizers through the massacre of Abame but still believes that Umuofia would fare better despite all signs indicating otherwise. Okonkwo and dictators are both prone to not acknowledging the reasonable solution in order to start a war. Okonkwo wishes for the villages to show off their power and might in war. Achebe's criticism of the blatant disregard for human life manifests itself in Okonkwo's failure to lead the village into war like he wanted.

### **Colonial or Native: Why Not Both?**

As a consequence of colonial rule, "independence" sparked a debate over what the new culture and country should be modeled after. The solutions are either embrace the colonizers' culture and forget precolonial Africa or follow strictly traditional African cultural values and eradicate all traces of colonialism. Achebe criticizes this dichotomy with the three characters of Unoka, Okonkwo, and Obierika. Although all of them are from the same culture, each of these men represent solutions to Africa's cultural problem through their varying degrees of "masculinity." These three characters also represent Fanon's three phases that happen to occur in order to form a national culture (206-208). These phases are imitation, heritage, and fighting. Imitation refers to replication of the previous colonial power's culture. Heritage follows with the colonial power's culture thrown to the side as inferior and damaging to the country. Fighting is the last phase in which the combination of precolonial Africa and the colonial Africa, despite its atrocities, influence the national culture. An important detail to understanding this is Okonkwo's feelings toward the white missionaries and the start of Umuofia's colonization. He believes that the only option is to go to war. War represents masculinity and avoiding it is feminine. Okonkwo sums up his feelings of the matter when he states, "worthy men are no more" (Achebe 200). This statement exhibits his expectations and disillusion about Umuofia. There is a narrow window of error that exists for Okonkwo for which he holds his village and the men in his family accountable despite his views contradicting with Umuofia.

Since Unoka is the least masculine according to Umuofia and its people, he exists on the opposite end of the spectrum from his son because he lacks the traditional African masculine traits that nationalist groups cling to. His “feminine” traits convey that he is the embodiment of the solution to forget precolonial African traditions and embrace the colonizer’s culture as if it was always there. If Unoka were the leader of Umuofia, Umuofia would surrender to the white colonizers without a fight and eradicate all traces of their precolonial culture in order to avoid conflict. Achebe argues that erasure of precolonial culture does not benefit the overall well-being of the country. Erasing the culture that Europeans initially took advantage of will not equate as a safeguard against such behavior in the modern day. Unoka’s behavior is what the colonizers see as ideal and therefore only benefits them. This attitude leaks into modern day politics. Complacency and negotiation are two very different actions that a leader could take. Complacency in a leader will result in domination of internal politics by external forces and the country in question will never really be independent. Negotiation allows the leader to defend their country and maintain their agency without declarations of war littering politics. Contrary to Unoka, Okonkwo is the embodiment of embracing precolonial African traditions as if colonization never happened. Okonkwo personifies all the masculine traditions and traits that nationalist groups handpick from precolonial Africa. Achebe argues through his portrayal of Okonkwo that just because the traditions were done *before* colonialization does not mean that they are inherently good. The character that is supposed to be this idealized version of what it means to be an African man is cruel, violent, and easy to anger. It is important to note that Okonkwo’s insistent need to appear masculine throughout the novel is not the norm of his culture. His past experience with his father, who was considered feminine, makes him feel the need to assert his masculinity to the point of cruelty. This is unique to his character and is not seen visibly in any other character. This also shows the emasculation that African countries and men experienced during and after colonization, further fueling the fire for nationalists to take over.

Throughout *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo is the literary depiction of dictators and dictatorships. Achebe explains through Okonkwo that dictators claim to be this great beacon of precolonial African tradition but in reality are cruel leaders that use tradition as a façade.

As a result of this, both Unoka and Okonkwo die in disgraceful ways that exhibit Achebe's prediction that neither form of government will be successful or last very long. Achebe believes that the right way of forming a new cultural identity is through the integration of precolonial African culture and the culture imposed during the colonial era. The character that embodies this way is Obierika. Obierika, like Okonkwo, is a successful man in Umuofia's eyes. However, there is one major difference. Achebe describes Obierika as "a man who thought about things" which directly contradicts his description of Okonkwo (125). Christopher Anyokwu states that it is Obierika's traits of "introspection, cool-headedness, wisdom, humour and an unprepossessing self-deportment combine to recommend him to the informed reader as a 'female' character" (Anyokwu 19). Obierika's perceived "femaleness" by Anyokwu does not limit his masculine traits. Okonkwo would not associate with Obierika if that were the case. His femininity allows him to question traditions of Umuofia and whether or not they should be done instead of blindly following them as Okonkwo does (Achebe 125). It is in Obierika's nature to want to hear what the white colonizers have problems with and decide a course of action that benefits both parties. Obierika is not the result of handpicked traditions and traits but of precolonial Africa taken as a whole. The integration of European ideals also influences his questioning of Umuofia's more unsavory traditions, such as abandoning twin infants because they are thought of as a bad omen. Achebe uses Obierika to advocate for Africans to take a stance of colonial ambivalence. The oppressive past is irreversible, but there are a few good results such as transportation or education. Achebe wants the African countries to utilize these unexpected benefits from colonialism. Therefore, Achebe presents Obierika as the right way to reconvene a culture after colonization: intertwining the two cultures and making a stronger one as the result.

Jameson's theory about "Third-World" literature rings vibrantly true in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Postcolonial writers apply conventions such as characters portraying countries or attitudes in their writing to contend that country's problems through character flaws. Achebe uses his character Okonkwo to criticize the military dictatorships that have taken over African politics. This convention is also represented in Unoka, Okonkwo, and Obierika to convey that erasing a major cultural influence will not fix Africa's cultural identity or political issues. Following those solutions will only perpetuate the false national culture that Fanon warns of. Only the combination of both will represent the people's "whole body effort" and the true national culture. Achebe's usage of these conventions allows for his novel to argue against these issues in Nigeria and in Africa as a whole. *Things Fall Apart* represents Jameson's "national allegory" through its postcolonial African context. It also provides examples of Fanon's theory on how a country's culture can successfully recover following the aftermath of colonialism. These issues that Achebe confronts continue on to the present day and further the novel's relevance to current African politics despite the sixty-year gap. This novel represents how the fight for Africa's "independence" is ongoing and newer forms of imperialism still pervade to this day.

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## TORTILLA CHIPS FOR ONE

by *Samantha Schroeder*

When my former husband and I separated, I felt an immediate shift in identity. No longer was I a wife and baker extraordinaire. No longer did I own a kitchen full of exquisite utensils or a collection of beloved cookbooks. Instead, I was a young woman in a different state with only a closet of clothes and a set of cheap, brightly-colored knives purchased in an after-Christmas sale. I had been known to host elaborate dinner parties or bake homemade bread to share with friends on my days off. My cooking skills were lauded as experienced beyond my age. But, after we separated, I spent my evenings holed up in my rented room, eating only plain tortilla chips for dinner. I had lost much more than just cookbooks and utensils—I had lost my sense of identity. Robert Shaw explores a similar loss of identity in his poem, “The Loss of the Joy of Cooking,” to reveal the way grief shifts our identity and alters the way we live our daily lives.

I was initially drawn to the poem because of the title. I had owned a copy of Irma Rombauer’s cookbook *The Joy of Cooking* but had lost it in the divorce. The speaker of Shaw’s poem indicates that although he still has the book, it is lost “somewhere in the house” (1), buried “at the bottom of some pile” (2), and failing to complete its duties of guiding the author through his cooking. Slowly, however, the poem develops a more morose meaning. It is not only the loss of *The Joy of Cooking*, but also the loss of his joy in cooking. He has lost not just a book, but a lover—the woman who taught him how to cook. It was once a loving activity, where she taught him how to “rock the blade” (16) of the knife over the

spices to release their potent flavors. Their kitchen island was a paradise of exotic and tantalizing moments where they could be found “stirring, measuring, tasting” (14) or “chopping, dicing, [and] mincing” (15). Now, he finds himself “marooned” (7) at his kitchen island and left alone on its deserted shores. Like Shaw, I remember the nights of slipping into the kitchen after my roommates were sleeping, bare feet tiptoeing on cold tile floor. During the day, the island was surrounded by people, buttering hot toast or crunching sweet cereal between rounds of laughter. At night, when I couldn’t sleep, the island sat alone, illuminated gray-green by the artificial moonlight of a fluorescent bulb.

In line twelve, Shaw places an extra indent before beginning, like a narrator who takes a deep breath before delving into his painful memories. The speaker appeals to the sense of smell to establish the distinct difference between the old life and the new. He remembers extracting potent smells from the foods they loved that bound themselves to memories. “The garlic’s earthy reek, the ginger’s sting” (18) harken back to the days when cooking fed more than just their bodies; it fed their relationship. Author Marcel Proust knew that scent is the sense that connects most strongly to emotional autobiographical memories (Chu; Hertz). A smell can take you back in time in a way that no other cue can and, for the speaker, smells created in the kitchen are intrinsically linked to time with his lover, and the smell of “anise wisping up from celery leaves” (19) brings back those memories with a painful sting. Each smell in his kitchen is tied to a moment, the remembrance of which reopens the wound. The lovers chose tantalizing and fragrant spices, but now the speaker cooks alone “without the stir of appetite” (11). He “push[es] ahead without a recipe” (8), “hack[ing] up” (21) onions, a food whose essence is sharp and stings the eyes. The onion, with its “fund of hoarded tears” (23), becomes a metaphor for the speaker and his loss of joy for the cooking he once loved.

Loneliness also creates a shift in the actions of cooking. Once, I had lovingly rolled and braided bread dough, spreading cinnamon and brown sugar liberally across the counters. But during my divorce, I cooked ingredients in the pan together, dirtying as few dishes as possible and focusing on feeding the

stomach instead of the soul. Painful memories forced both myself and the speaker of the poem to rush through the movements of cooking. Instead of constructing beautiful dishes, he throws the onions and some “hunks of meat” (24-25) into hot oil that “sputter[s] angrily” (22). His meals collect together to create something that “isn’t quite right” (26)—the plan foiled or lost before it was finished. His life is no longer a polished recipe, its ingredients all lined up like a perfect sonnet. Instead, he has anger without recourse, struggle without hope of renewal.

Shaw’s use of metaphor throughout the poem is particularly powerful in expressing the way grief has changed his identity and daily life. He delves into the way grief steals the appetite—not only for food, but for the life that once brought fulfillment. Days become a race to the end, rather than a celebration of moments. Days off are not spent in the kitchen, but in search of a way to escape the memories. Each meal cooked and eaten alone is a reminder of the loneliness and a reminder of the missing “unlisted ingredient” (30). Appetite is lost and replaced by necessity. Eating sustains the life you no longer want but must bear like a burden.

Though Shaw’s poem is filled nearly to the brim with loss, it offers a small morsel of hope. The book is not gone, it is only lost. The author may find the book and from it make new recipes, new memories, new joy. When I lived on tortilla chips, I knew that it was temporary. One day, my hands would again bake pies; they would again sauté onions and peppers. Someday soon, they would reach across a table surrounded by friends and perhaps even find new hands to hold.

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