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Mission Statement

Literature and film continually reimagine an ever-changing world, and through our research we discover our relationships to those art forms and the cultures they manifest. Publishing one issue each semester, *Wide Angle* serves as a conduit for the expression and critique of that imagination. A joint publication between English majors and faculty, the journal embodies the interdisciplinary nature of the Department of English at Samford University. It provides a venue for undergraduate research, an opportunity for English majors to gain experience in the business of editing and publishing, and a forum for all students, faculty, and staff to publish their best work. As a wide-angle lens captures a broad field of vision, this journal expands its focus to include critical and creative works, namely academic essays, book and film reviews, and commentaries, as well as original poetry, short fiction and non-fiction, and screenplays.

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Essay

Jillian A. Fantin

Love's a Drag: Reconciling Gender, Sexuality, and Attraction in Sonnet 20

William Shakespeare's prolific career resulted in a collection of 154 sonnets. The first 126 are known as the "Fair Youth" sonnets that express affections to an unnamed young man. Sonnet 20's male speaker addresses his feelings towards the fair youth within the context of understanding internal and external contradictions of both parties in regards to their gender, their expressions of masculinity versus femininity, opinions of each other, and relationship. Sonnet 20 also explores themes of gender and love within a binary construct that accepted only heterosexuality as "normal." The masculine speaker reconciles with his gender and sexuality throughout the course of the poem by recognizing both his and his lover's existing contradictions, as well as understanding why those contradictions exist. Ultimately, the speaker contents himself to his paradoxical lover, contradictory affections, and nontraditional yet sufficient relationship.

Before Sonnet 20 begins, the structure itself sets up the sonnet as a paradox of masculine content and "feminine" structure through the inclusion of exclusively feminine rhyme. This sonnet adheres to Shakespeare's typical sonnet rhyme scheme and meter. However, Sonnet 20 is the only one of Shakespeare's sonnets that contains only feminine rhyme (*The Norton Shakespeare* 553n1). Masculine rhyme rhymes only one syllable, whereas feminine rhyme rhymes two or more syllables. For instance, Sonnet 20's first and third lines end with "painted" and "acquainted," respectively (Shakespeare, "Sonnet 20" 1, 3). Both syllables in the word "painted" rhyme with the final two syllables of the word "acquainted," which makes the rhyme

feminine due to more than one syllable being rhymed. In contrast, Shakespeare's Sonnet 25's fifth and seventh syllables end with the words "increase" and "decrease" ("Sonnet 25" 5, 7). Only the final syllables of both words rhyme with each other, which is an example of masculine rhyme. Given that the content of Sonnet 20 involves the speaker describing the various paradoxes within himself and the gender of his lover, creating a paradox between feminine structure and masculine content creates a background for the paradoxical nature of Sonnet 20.

The speaker begins by establishing the various paradoxes existing within the speaker and between him and his lover:

> A woman's face with Nature's own hand painted
> Hast thou, the master-mistress of my passion;
> A woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted
> With shifting change as is false women's fashion; ("Sonnet 20," 1-4)

The speaker juxtaposes the masculine and the feminine by clarifying that his lover has "a woman's face" given by nature, but is also "the master-mistress of [the speaker's] passion" (1-2). The lover encompasses maleness and femaleness, which confounds the speaker at the start. By establishing this paradox within the sonnet's first two lines, the poem illustrates how the speaker is beginning the process of reconciling his relationship to, feelings for, and attraction to his nontraditional lover. The lover only has the positive aspects of women and none of the negative. Not only does the speaker begin the sonnet by comparing the youth he loves to a woman, but he also describes him as superior to women. The youth has "a woman's gentle heart," but does not have the flighty "shifting" eyes that are the "false women's fashion" (3-4). Recognizing and celebrating his lover's characteristics in comparison to the gender those characteristics typically belong to is a part of establishing the paradoxes, beginning the process of reconciliation.

Through vivid descriptions, the second quatrain continues the speaker's comparison of the lover and women, adding further details about the distinctions between them:

An eye more bright than theirs, less false in rolling,

Gilding the object whereupon it gazeth;

A man in hue, all hues in his controlling,

Which steals men's eyes and women's souls amazeth. (5-8)

These distinctions, however, become more about the relationship the lover has with women as a gender and comparing that relationship to the relationship between the speaker and the lover. The speaker's recognition of the youth's characteristics turns to celebration of him and denigration of women: "An eye more bright than theirs, less false in rolling" (5). The speaker describes an aspect of his lover – namely, his eyes – as being "less false" than those of a woman (5). Unlike women's eyes, the youth's eyes are "more bright," making everyone and everything "gild[ed]…whereupon it gazeth" (5-6). Though these womanly characteristics come to a more-perfect fruition when embodied in the youth, the speaker clarifies that the lover is a man through caesura and repetition in line seven as he repeats the word "hue" twice and breaks the line with a comma: "A man in hue, all hues in his controlling" (7). By breaking the line with a comma and causing a pause to occur so abruptly in the center of the poem's center line, the speaker reveals the difficulty he is having reconciling the paradoxes of his lover's nature and the feelings he has for him. The reconciling continues as the speaker explains that the youth manages to enrapture both genders through his "hues," or appearance, compounding the paradoxes once again (7-8). Now, the lover is seen to attract both men and women through his paradoxical nature of both man and woman. As the speaker recognizes this, the poem's speaker progresses past recognition of the paradoxes themselves into the impacts of those paradoxes.

Not only does the speaker understand that the contradictions exist, but he considers how those contradictions came to be and how his feelings towards the youth have developed by personifying nature and manipulating the rhyme:

And for a woman wert thou first created,

Till Nature as she wrought thee fell a-doting,

And by addition me of thee defeated

By adding one thing to my purpose nothing. (9-12)

Immediately following the speaker's description of the all-encompassing draw the lover has on both men and women, he describes that this youth was originally made as a woman, "til nature as she wrought thee fell a-doting" (9-10) Nature, thus, changed the lover into a man to satisfy her needs (11-12). Nature continues to be personified by the speaker and, following the first personification from line one, the speaker shows her as an active player in crafting his lover's paradoxical gender. She is identified as the creator of his sufferings and a catalyst for reconciliation. Just as nature added an unnecessary phallus to the body of his lover, the speaker adds the word "nothing" – a slant rhyme amidst clear feminine rhymes – to the end of the third quatrain. The speaker adds the phrase "one thing" to highlight how only a single aspect of the lover has "defeated" the speaker (12). Both respective additions do little for the purposes of aiding the lover's physical relationship to the speaker and to aid the rhyme, but both exist nonetheless. Though both the lover's phallus and the slant rhyme "nothing" are seen on a surface level as hindrances, the speaker shows his contentment with both of these in the concluding couplet.

After twelve lines of struggling to reconcile with his lover's identity, the speaker concludes with his concise, repetition-inclusive contentment: "But since she pricked thee out for

women's pleasure, / Mine be thy love, and thy love's use their treasure" (13-14). Though all these paradoxes act against the speaker, he is satisfied to love someone emotionally who will also be loved physically by women. In the process, the speaker also recognizes that being without physical intimacy does not hinder his relationship, reinforcing his acceptance of the youth. The speaker shifts from establishing and defining the various contradictions that impact his relationship to his lover to recognizing that those impacts will not be negative. "Pricked" as an active verb identifies what has been added to the lover by nature, which reinforces how nature purposefully "defeated" the speaker by refusing to leave "nothing," a euphemism in Shakespeare's time for vagina (Shakespeare, "Sonnet 20" 11, 13 & *Norton Anthology* 553n4). Choosing the word "pricked" to make a pun on his misfortune also suggests the speaker's bawdy ownership of his unfortunate physical detachment from the youth. Further, the final line repeats "thy love" to reinforce the speaker's contentment with the precisely-outlined paradoxes. While love alone is sufficient for the speaker, the "treasure" and "use" of the lover's phallus will be reserved for women (14). By also including "but" at the start of the couplet, indicating the *volta* in Shakespeare's sonnets, the speaker's conclusion is clearly outlined to show the speaker's contentment to the explained contradictions.

William Shakespeare crafted 126 "Fair Youth" sonnets, which consist of poems written to an unnamed youthful masculine lover. Within the context of compulsory heterosexuality, Shakespeare managed to explore attraction, gender, and sexuality with nuance, and his "Fair Youth" sonnets continue to encourage close reading and analysis. The exploration of Sonnet 20 in particular explores the attractions between a male speaker and a paradoxically gendered "Fair Youth." The speaker spends the poem identifying, describing, and reconciling with paradoxes

within himself and his lover, coming to the ultimate conclusion that a romantic relationship with the youth, though it lacks physicality, is sufficient for him.

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Essay

Jillian A. Fantin

Triumph of the Other: Female Homosexuality's Survival in *Howards End*

Before the advent of feminist and gender criticism and queer theory, the terms *mal*e and *heterosexual* simply existed alongside their respective counterparts of *female* and *homosexual*. Queer theory introduced the idea of a "center" and its "Other" (Stein & Plummer 182). E.M. Forster utilizes this theory that the majority opinion is built up through a "conceptual dualism" that sequesters the minority view into the position of an Other (Stein and Plummer 182). Rather than reinforcing the power of maleness and heterosexuality, however, Forster redefines these values as imperialistic norms and paints them in a negative and antiquated light through the Wilcox family and various relationships throughout *Howards End*. Through the representation of various heterosexual and homosocial relationships, Forster suggests that heterosexuality is one of these imperialistic norms and has an unfeasible existence in the liberal, feudal future of the countercultural Other that is Howards End.

An imperialistic norm is any value imposed on a person's identity that can cause emotional strife or even the destruction of individuals and communities. In a society of imperialistic norms, *liberal* and *feudal* exist as the Others to the center of *imperial* and *capitalistic*, with *liberal* describing a space allowing for progressive movement and discussion and *feudal* meaning a livelihood based on mutual work and community. Although homosexuality and homosociality are considered to be the Other, *Howards End* advocates for them and various Others. However, it does not stop at simply critiquing imperialistic norms but calls society to action in terms of the institution of heterosexuality.

Before being able to understand why heterosexuality is an imperialistic norm, gender and gender roles must be examined. In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler, a prominent American gender theorist, describes gender as something that is performance-based: “Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 33). Rather than being intrinsic in humans, gender only appears to be substantive for conformity and is actually the result of social conditioning to whatever society defines as the “norm.” This sentiment is reflected in *Howards End* when prescribed roles for gender are set out. For example, the narrator states “man is for war, woman for the recreation of the warrior. . . . She cannot win in a real battle, having no muscles, only nerves” (Forster 225). Twentieth-century England has specific places for men and women, and going outside of them means suffering the inability to function with the rest of society. Gender theory provides an explanation as to why men and women perform their genders in a specific way.

Gender theory, which establishes gender’s performative qualities, clarifies why heterosexuality is unable to last. If it is true that gender is performance-based in order to conform to society, then heterosexuality can also be considered to be performance-based in nature. Arlene Stein and Ken Plummer’s *I Can’t Even Think Straight* outlines the dualistic nature of the “center” and the Other, saying that “queer theorists claim that existing gay strategies . . . have tended to rely on conceptual dualisms . . . that reinforce the notion of minority as Other and create binary oppositions which leave the "center" intact” (Stein & Plummer 182). Although gender and sexuality are not the same, both rely on a dualistic binary opposition with one center—namely, heterosexuality, men, and masculinity—and the Other—homosexuality, women, and femininity. Furthermore, performing gender in the way that aligns with the center

allows for only heterosexual relationships to exist. Men and women have to exist in a certain performative dynamic in order to uphold the binary oppositions, which homosexuality would challenge. In a heteronormative environment, homosexuality is the Other, meaning that it cannot be realized until compulsory imperialistic norms are stripped away. Heteronormativity remains the center as long as society adheres to strict gender roles.

Imposed gender roles strain the relationships between men and women and bring into question the nature of why individuals begin relationships with certain people. In "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," Butler writes, "gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a stylized repetition" (519). The performative nature of gender causes tensions to arise between men and women, especially when one of the genders attempts to stop conforming to those imperialistic norms. This tension reveals the unnatural state of gender's social conditioning, revealing the inherently doomed nature of heterosexual relationships built on a foundation of performance.

Further from simply imposed gender roles, heterosexuality itself is also purported by society to be not only necessary for existence but also normal. In *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Experience,* Adrienne Rich argues that "heterosexuality . . . needs to be recognized and studied as a *political institution*" rather than a sign of normalcy to the human experience (929). Rich goes on to describe the relationship between gender roles and heterosexuality, citing eight "characteristics of male power" that men subsequently hold when given continued, unchallenged power through instituted heterosexuality (930). Forcing heterosexuality results in a tense society with individuals forced into unsuitable and unwanted romantic dynamics, just as forcing gender roles onto individuals creates tension within themselves and in relationships with

others. Although the Others still exist within society, imperialistic norms force them to develop into a counterculture and function outside of society. Refusing to integrate Others into society and normalize them dooms heterosexual relationships to be performed in a flawed, incomplete manner. The resulting performance is one that, as Rich discusses in regards to lesbianism, is simply a political institution imposed upon individuals and society.

Specifically in the case of *Howards End*, homosexual and homosocial relationships between women rather than men are the ones that are able to remain in the counterculture. Because the male gender is in power and maintains control over the female, the man remains in control of the Other, or the woman, and remains an imperialistic norm. Both women and homosexuality are the respective Others to men and heterosexuality. Since Howards End counters the imperialistic norms that the Wilcoxes follow and the Basts are unable to escape from, only the Schlegel sisters can thrive in Howards End. Helen and Leonard's relationship also differs from this due to Leonard's inability to escape from the imposed duty of his relationship with Jacky, who also suffers at the hands of the imperialistic norms of heterosexuality that almost require her to become a prostitute in order to counteract what Henry Wilcox did to her.

J. Hillis Miller writes in his essay *Just Reading "Howards End"* that "women in society have little choice between marrying . . . and not marrying" (475). Miller's statement proves true in *Howards End* when examining the heterosexual relationships experienced by many of the women in the novel. While traveling to see Henry Wilcox, Margaret Schlegel scolds herself about her thoughts of the impending meeting: "How like an old maid to fancy that Mr. Wilcox was courting her!" (Forster 147). Margaret's fear of remaining unmarried is justified given the society she and her sister live within. Although Margaret and Helen think radically for their time, both are still constrained by "Edwardian assumptions that those around them make about the

place of women" (Miller 475). Her decision to wed Henry Wilcox indicates a sense of social practicality as someone who understands that since she "was not young or very rich," it was rare "that a man of any standing should take her seriously" (Forster 151). Margaret would not have been taken care of without a traditional male figure in her life due to the stringent gender roles of the time she in which she lived, making her decision to accept Henry's dry proposal less about ideals of love and mutual respect and more about practical necessity and survival in a patriarchal society. The closest relationships Margaret has, however, are with her sister Helen and Ruth Wilcox. All of these women experience heterosexual relationships, and each relationship ends up failing. Ruth Wilcox is misunderstood by Henry Wilcox throughout their entire marriage, and Helen ends up becoming pregnant out of wedlock. However, the women, these Others, understand each other.

Leonard and Jacky Bast could also be characterized as Others in the novel since they do not exactly fit into the standard relationship dynamics. However, although the character of Leonard Bast adheres considerably less to performing masculinity, he and Jacky are still a failed heterosexual couple due to the stringent gender roles kept in place by society. As the novel progresses, the story emerges that Jacky Bast is a prostitute because she and Henry Wilcox slept together when she was sixteen. Leonard pities her, wondering if she would "ever receive the justice that is mercy—the justice for by-products that the world is too busy to bestow?" (Forster 272). Unfortunately, due to the stringent gender roles and the overarching patriarchy of the time, it is unlikely that Jacky would ever receive grace, assistance from society, or recognition as a wronged woman, especially after Leonard's death. The Basts adhered to imperialistic norms by performing their genders and maintaining a heterosexual relationship, but not for the same reasons as the Wilcoxes. Both Jacky and Leonard needed to survive in their own time, a time

governed by these aforementioned imperialistic norms. Rather than attempting to conform for control, both Leonard and Jacky performed their genders in a stringent and oppressive manner to their own psyches and maintained a failing heterosexual relationship in order to survive as lower class citizens. Jacky prostituted herself for survival in a world where wealthy men used poor women for their bodies; Leonard works himself to an eventual death and cares for Jacky in his own attempt to be seen as an equal amongst the likes of the Schlegels and Basts. The Basts, although they did not manage to conform completely to the imperialistic norms set before them, could not inhabit the home that exists as the symbol of idyllic "otherness"—namely, Howards End—due to their attempts. However, the offspring of Leonard and Helen, an Other who inhabits Howard End, will be raised by a pair of women in the counterculture to reject imperialistic norms.

Howards End is a home wherein the imperialistic norms that constrict individuals and relationships do not have any effect. The book ends as Margaret and Helen Schlegel, the founders of this feminist utopia, move into Howards End. However, they are not alone. Helen and Leonard's son is going to be raised on these grounds outside of the influence of the culture of the time. The reason this is a "feminist utopia" rather than simply a "female utopia" is because the gender roles themselves are being torn down. Further, though Margaret and Helen are sisters with no sexual relationship between the pair implied, both are individually coded as lesbians.

Both Margaret and Helen Schlegel are individually coded as lesbians through their respective characterizations. Helen's homosexual characterization comes from her close relationship to a woman during a critical point in her life where a man would typically be present. When explaining to Margaret why she has been absent, Helen reveals not only that she is currently pregnant, but that she has been staying with a woman named Monica. Helen's most

equal and respectful relationship is with this Monica, an Italian feminist who Helen herself claims "is much the best person to see [her] through" and "has been extraordinary sensible with [her]" (Forster 252). This relationship with Monica is far different from her initial relationship with Paul, which is established due to his inevitability of being the only one who could keep Helen in proximity with the Wilcoxes (38). Whereas Helen's lesbian coding emerges late in the novel from her relationship with Monica, Margaret's homosexual undertones emerge in her pragmatic, resourceful nature which reflects in her atypical gender performance as a woman. When Margaret and Mrs. Wilcox engage in conversation together, Mrs. Wilcox observes that she feels as though Margaret "forget[s] . . . [she's] a girl" (77). Margaret's interests lie in the masculine activities of making money and planning the future. For instance, she often "[lies] awake at nights wondering where, where on earth they and all their belongings would be deposited in September next" and is "busy with the house-agents" rather than worrying about the typical feminine activities of the age (138, 139). Her nontraditional gender performance as a woman also emerges in her view of marriage. Margaret's interest in a courtship from Henry Wilcox comes from her desire to no longer feel "solitary and old-maidish . . . poor, silly and unattractive" like the spinster she once met (147). Further, instead of Margaret's marriage to Henry Wilcox being passionate or full of love, she performs her duties as "a loyal wife" and views her marriage as a practical contract to live in an age where women needed to be married (259). Margaret's masculine interests and performance, when coupled with her views on marriage as a pragmatic performance of survival, characterizes her as lesbian because of her Otherness in relationships and gender performance. Helen's own admiration and association with Monica and Margaret's pragmatic rather than romantic desires in heterosexual dynamics

reinforce lesbian undertones onto their own individual existence and their implicitly affirmed lack of heterosexual attraction.

Because of the sisters' individual lesbian coding, together, Margaret and Helen exhibit female homosociality, a committed dynamic between two women that is devoid of sex. They, as a pair of women, raise a son. Though they are each individually coded as lesbian, their relationship together is that of female homosociality because it is platonic, utterly nonsexual, and without male and masculine influence. Their dynamic cannot be constituted as adhering to the imperialistic norm of forced heterosexuality. Neither Margaret nor Helen find themselves constrained in Howards End since neither is in a relationship with a man, which would require them to revert to performing gender and sexuality to fit back into the imperialistic society.

From this idea of a feminist utopia, one thing that is important to remember is that Howards End is not simply a place for women. Homosexual relationships and women are able to survive within the novel because these Others consistently go against the imperialistic norms, while most men still conform to the traditions of performing masculinity. It is in this destruction of imperialistic gender roles and relationships that people of both genders are able or unable to remain in Howards End. For example, Evie Wilcox, although a woman, is still a product and proponent of the imperialistic values held by the rest of her family. Along with the rest of the Wilcoxes, the values she adheres to make her unable to fit into the counterculture that is Howards End. Gender roles are far more stringent in heterosexual relationships because the performative nature of gender conformity affects the dynamic of men and women. In order to survive in the imperialistic society, men and women must do their best to perform their respective genders as close to the established norm as they can. Additionally, homosexual and homosocial relationships between women are entirely removed from the influence of men,

males, and the masculine. Homosexual and homosocial relationships amongst the Others that are women subvert gender roles and do not require any sort of antiquated performance in order to make them successful.

Howards End is a novel rooted in the rejection of imperialistic norms. The estate of Howards End itself is countercultural, becoming a feudal and liberal refuge for those who do not perform and conform. Forster himself as an author did not conform to heterosexuality or established gender roles, chose to live his life as out of the closet as much as he was able, and wrote novels with issues and undertones of homosexuality. Rather than simply critiquing the imperialistic norm of compulsory heterosexuality, however, Forster shows the shortcomings of all the heterosexual relationships between the characters. Simultaneously, he showcases the successful female relationships and continues their successes into the end of the novel, with the only truly stable pairings being laced with lesbian undertones. Forster not only critiques the world in which he wrote his novel, but the reality in which he lived. His experiences being raised in a matriarchal environment and recognizing his homosexuality meant that he could understand the confines that strict gender roles and compulsory sexuality placed on people. In recognizing the performative aspect of gender in his own time, Forster crafted a nuanced and relevant novel that manages to critique twenty-first-century American views of female homosexuality and homosociality and the interactions between genders.

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Essay

Emily London

De Certeau and Dumbledore's Army: Delinquency in Spaces in *Harry Potter*

In J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, the castle of Hogwarts itself frequently plays a character-like role in the action of the novels. From moving staircases to an entirely forbidden wing of the third floor, students can never quite figure out how the physical structure of their school will develop next. Perhaps the most fascinating and useful of these developments is the Room of Requirement in the fifth book, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, a room upon which the delinquent group Dumbledore's Army stumbles as they try to figure out a location for their secret meetings so they can learn magic despite the oppressive rules of Dolores Umbridge. Because the room proves essential to the initial success and ultimate failure of Dumbledore's Army in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, the novel questions delinquent groups' use of spaces to negotiate agency under oppressive systems. Michel De Certeau's theory of delinquency in places and spaces explains the failure of this group in using the Room of Requirement as Dumbledore's Army learns they must ultimately use methods beyond De Certeau's system to utilize the place successfully.

The Room of Requirement, in a truly magical fashion, does not seem to exist permanently, as it appears only when someone needs it and transforms its contents constantly to fit the needs of its users. The secret student group Dumbledore's Army never questions this room's existence, attributing it to the mysterious magic of their school and simply taking advantage of its unique properties for their secret meetings—until the room itself provides the means for their enemies to catch them. Michel de Certeau's theory of *place* and *space* in *The*

Practice of Everyday Life explains the difficulties such a delinquent group might encounter in using a location within the domain of an oppressor's control and the techniques they might employ to accomplish their tasks. He begins with distinguishing two terms, defining *place* as the "instantaneous configuration of positions" that "implies an indication of stability" (De Certeau 117). A place is a physical location defined by its permanent built environment. Any geographic location, place of business, school, or street corner is a place. A space, however, is "actuated by the ensemble of movement deployed within it" (117). A space is much less stable than a place because its users possess control over it by producing it through their actions. A *space* exists in conjunction with a *place* but is separate from it. Simply put, a space is how someone uses, views, or shapes a place, both tangibly through its built environment and intangibly. Though a space may be created through an authority's intentions for a certain place's purpose, as a library is intended for public entertainment and education, people can use the essential negotiability of spaces through actions to individualize a space for their own purposes, as if that same library becomes a meeting space for a group of protestors. De Certeau names this practice of individualizing a space *tactics,* and he argues nomadism is an essential facet of tactics in transforming a space: "A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance . . . The weak must continually turn to their own ends forces alien to them" (xix). The users of tactics cannot simply remain in a place; social delinquents must cleverly subvert the same rules that regulate a physical place to create a different space for themselves. When "a society no longer offers to subjects or groups symbolic outlets and expectations of spaces, where there is no longer any alternative to disciplinary falling into line or illegal drifting away," delinquents successfully rebel by using a place in technical compliance but for their own purposes (130). In *Harry Potter and the Order of*

the Phoenix, Dumbledore's Army, as a victim of this kind of system, attempts to rebel, using tactics that resemble this nomadic subversion of rules for places.

Dolores Umbridge, as new administrator at Hogwarts School, quickly gains the hatred of Harry Potter and like-minded students as she extends her control of the castle further and further through regulations concerning every detail of student activity and education. As a government-appointed teacher of the "Defense Against the Dark Arts" course, Umbridge refuses to allow any of her students to practice defensive magic. Instead, she denies the series' villain's power and claims all the students will need to know to do well on the practical section of the standardized exams is theory, not practice. Her reach, however, begins to extend far beyond this class, as she exercises her appointed power over the entire castle to limit students' ability to self-educate, to meet recreationally, and even to play sports. Amidst her oppressive reign, Harry Potter forms a group named "Dumbledore's Army," first to simply teach and practice defensive spells as Umbridge forbade but ultimately to retaliate against her denial that students need not fear the return of Lord Voldemort.

Umbridge's method of enforcing her rules leaves no apparent freedom in the castle for students' outright rebellion. Any time Harry speaks out in her class, violating her mantra "there will be no need to talk," she physically tortures him under the guise of "detention" (Rowling 240). Later, after the introduction of her title "High Inquisitor," she extends her reach so she can punish any student formerly outside of her control: "The High Inquisitor will henceforth have supreme authority over all punishments, sanctions, and removals of privileges pertaining to the students of Hogwarts, and the power to alter such punishments, sanctions, and removals of privileges as may have been ordered by other staff members" (416). This lack of agency resembles De Certeau's description of the society in which his tactics become paramount: "there

is no longer any alternative to disciplinary falling into line or illegal drifting away" (De Certeau 130). Harry and his comrades first seek to abandon the physical landscape of the castle to meet, precisely because they know Umbridge will resist them within Hogwarts. They try to meet in a bar in the adjacent town that students visit on designated weekends, but this proves too inconvenient and conspicuous, and so they must, as De Certeau explains, make use of some place within the castle for their own purposes—the domain of Umbridge's control.

The superficial purpose of Dumbledore's Army as a "study group" to practice magic for the exams essentially exists in the domain of Umbridge's control. They play into her exact mission as an educator by subverting her intentions for the class of only reading theory into enacting the actual practice so they will succeed on the standardized exams, as she desires them to. This plan closely resembles De Certeau's tactics, as they attempt to technically follow the rules and intentions of Umbridge even as they use them for their own rebellion. At the time of the group's formation, Hermione assures Harry, "'I've looked up everything I can think of about study groups and homework groups and they're definitely allowed'" (*Order* 336). Because of this seeming adherence to the rules, when Umbridge confronts Harry about the group, he can pretend he did not know they committed an infraction (611). Because of their practice, the members of Dumbledore's Army prove superior to anyone else on the exams for Umbridge's course, even after she discovers and disbands them (714). They do achieve marginal success, though Dumbledore's Army does fail to sustain their tactics. Umbridge catches them, and their use of the Room of Requirement as their meeting place is the key to their downfall.

The Room of Requirement, in the system of De Certeau, is both a place and space because of its unique properties. It seems the perfect place to meet for Dumbledore's Army, because it is within the castle but not easily accessible: "it is a room that a person can only enter

. . . when they have real need of it. Sometimes it is there, and sometimes it is not, but when it appears, it is always equipped for the seeker's needs" (386-87). The room is essentially a physical place that can be negotiated according to the user's intentions, even unconsciously. It serves as one place in Umbridge's domain of the castle the group can easily appropriate for their meetings, regaining agency because they now have a space within the system they can use.

However, the Room of Requirement does not seem designed for the continuous use Dumbledore's Army sustains over much of the novel. Though the room is a negotiated space, the group does not fulfill all the tactics De Certeau describes. They omit the fundamental nomadism of tactics, meeting consistently in the place week after week instead of doing so temporarily. This violates not only De Certeau's principles but also the apparent nature of the Room of Requirement itself. A room that only appears in times of desperation, before vanishing mysteriously so someone would be hard-pressed to find it again, is not intended for their weekly use. In De Certeau's terms, the Room of Requirement must occupy a different category than place because even its built environment is supposed to be impermanent, but the group treats it as their permanent base. Dobby, who informed Harry Potter of the room in the first place, called it the "Come-and-Go Room," a name encapsulating its transient nature (386). Dumbledore's Army exploits this place, subverting both Umbridge's intentions and the rules of the Room of Requirement. Once a traitor discloses the group's meeting place to Umbridge, this consistent use of the Room of Requirement becomes their fatal flaw because, just as they are able to access the room in their need, she too can enter precisely because she needs to find them (608).

Dumbledore's Army fails here because the Room of Requirement's structure does not fall strictly into a category of place or space, and they must approach it with different tactics than De Certeau defines. An essential characteristic of De Certeau's theory of places used by delinquents

is the assumption that an authority fully controls the place. Rules set by an authority govern places that groups then appropriate for their own purposes. Umbridge is certainly an all-powerful figure within the built environment of Hogwarts, but the Room of Requirement does not seem to fall under the same rules the rest of the castle does, because its users define its physical existence and environment. De Certeau does not account for this third category besides place and space. It is a customizable room accessed from inside the physical domain of Umbridge's control, but once the students are inside, her rules do not alter the room's essential function. She was able to enter it only because she approached it as a user with a requirement, not as an authority with governing rules. Desire and need, not rules or authorities, determine the nature of the Room of Requirement. Dumbledore's Army used the room to subvert Umbridge's authority, but the place was a refuge from her rules within her domain, not actually under her control. Dumbledore's Army has to go beyond the tactics of De Certeau in their delinquency to completely escape Umbridge's rules rather than appropriate them.

Ultimately, Dumbledore's Army fails in using tactics, but in a later *Harry Potter* novel, the same group does succeed in using the Room of Requirement to rebel in Hogwarts by realizing the third category the room occupies and approaching it according to the rules of desire and need. In the concluding book of the *Harry Potter* series, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Dumbledore's Army leads a larger rebellion within Hogwarts, this time against the villain Voldemort himself. Because the room operates on desire and need, one of the students learns they must imagine and ask explicitly what they desire the room to do: "It's a proper hideout, as long as one of us stays in here, they can't get at us . . . You've got to ask for *exactly* what you need—and it'll do it for you! You've just got to make sure you close the loophole!" (*Deathly Hallows* 578). The prior loophole was that anyone who *needed* to enter could do so—

including Umbridge when she sought to catch Dumbledore's Army. A user simply needed to explicitly ask that their enemies not be allowed in, and then, as long as the user remains within the environment of the Room of Requirement, the room would coincide with that user's desires or needs. By learning that the more transient and whim-based structure of the Room of Requirement could be used to their advantage, Dumbledore's Army creates a stronghold essential to their final stand in the conclusion of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows.* An external authority that governs with rules and mandates cannot control the room because the room bases its structure on the internal users' needs and desires.

Dumbledore's Army's initial failure in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* to fully realize the tactics of De Certeau still yields marginal success within his system but ultimately demonstrates their need to go beyond the assumptions contained in his theory. The group finds ultimate success once they understand the less permanent structure that governs the Room of Requirement, one that could betray them if users of the room do not explicitly outline their desires for the place. Dumbledore's Army must discover a place that appears to be under external control (i.e. because of its physical location inside the castle) yet in reality adheres to its own internal structure rather than Umbridge's rules. The novel seems to advocate that a delinquent group like Dumbledore's Army would find only more difficulty in using a place actually governed by rules like those of Umbridge. In Rowling's world, a physical location that a group could successfully appropriate under an oppressive authority might not exist, and rebels must depend upon a magical entity like the Room of Requirement and a mere illusion of external control instead.

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Essay

Elizabeth Sturgeon

Conversational Noise: Waugh's Parody of Futurism through Dialogue in *Vile Bodies*

Introduction: The Movement and Substance of Progress

In her analysis of *Vile Bodies* and other works of Evelyn Waugh, Brooke Allen examines Waugh's view of emerging futurism and innovation, a view that wavers between parody and tribute. Though Waugh celebrates parts of Modernism and depicts them accurately, Allen notes that Waugh mocks elements of futuristic thought and action within his work. She states, "Waugh's work is everywhere permeated with the idea that the only advantage 'progress' can bring is the perishable one of novelty . . . the machine is empty of any value, having added nothing in the way of real aesthetic enjoyment or spiritual life" (323). With characters mesmerized by fast cars and published rumors, the novel examines futuristic yet empty obsessions of their modern world, and Waugh parodies progress through the shallowness and silliness of his characters' actions. Furthermore, Allen notes that the fast-paced nature of futuristic technology amplifies Waugh's composition because the novel resembles "a collage made up of jagged segments of contemporary magazines, newspapers, and conversation fragments" (320). Mirroring the increased speed of automobiles, news distribution, and other modern technologies, Waugh's plot moves abruptly from scene to scene. The disconnect between scenes in *Vile Bodies* mocks society's infatuation with the newness and speed that fracture traditional social interactions.

In *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Neil Postman comments on the modern disconnect in communication specifically, and he begins one of his chapters by describing a debate between

Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas. Before the two were famous, people listened to hours of oral debate, and Postman questions, “What kind of audience was this? Who were these people who could so cheerfully accommodate themselves to seven hours of oratory?” (43). He uses the example to contrast the emptiness and quickness of modern language and the inability for those accustomed to this language to focus on hours of intellectual discussion. Postman explains the focus on thoughtful communication before the late nineteenth century and states, “To these people, reading was both their connection to and their model of the world” (61-2). In contrast to a center on reading, Postman analyzes the movement into the “Age of Show Business” and how it distorts modern language. He marks the 1890s as the disruption of language, when advertisements replaced normal communication with slogans and jingles. Postman explains, “by the turn of the century, advertisers no longer assumed rationality on the part of their potential customers. Advertising became one part depth psychology, one part aesthetic theory” (60). In this way, modern advertising removes communication and substance from language and replaces it with anything that captures attention quickly.

This ability to capture attention, the medium of what needs to be said, emerges in the electronic era and holds the potential to change how humans understand information. Marshall McLuhan in *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man* explains the difference between the content and format of a message. He states, “If it is asked, ‘What is the content of speech?,’ it is necessary to say, ‘It is an actual process of thought, which is in itself nonverbal’” (1). Here McLuhan separates the thought within a statement from the verbal speech made and examines “the psychic and social consequences of the designs or patterns as they amplify or accelerate existing processes” (1). The medium in which one communicates, through technology and modern thought, now transforms the statement by adding to its value. McLuhan uses cubism as

an example of how “sequence yields to the simultaneous” (5). The form of the painting speaks as loudly as the subject matter when form and function collide. Within the electric age, the method of communication speaks within itself, and McLuhan argues that within the creative possibilities for mediums, “the medium is the message” (5). Inner content and thought can be expressed through a form that electricity provides in the modern age.

The transformation of communication and media explored by Postman and McLuhan, though full of technological opportunity, adds up to a modern noise that Allen criticizes as a part of futurism and Waugh’s work. She explains that “noise” appears in many of Waugh’s party scenes and that “In *Vile Bodies* that noise is almost exclusively talk—most of it vacuous enough to qualify as noise, pure and simple” (Allen 321). Modeling the sound of a modern car or train, Waugh places the inevitable noise of futurism within conversations, those composed of words without meaning. While McLuhan admires the combination of message and media, within *Vile Bodies*, the characters speak through the media of party talk and tabloids without any real message. The novel’s conversations enact futurism in that “the rapid cutting back and forth reinforces the dynamic effect, the various scenes penetrate one another via the abrupt switches from place to place” (Allen 326). Just as the speed of futuristic innovation appears in how scenes transition, characters rush through their conversations like the futurism Allen recognizes. In fact, though progress emerges during this rise of futurism and increase in technology, the communication regresses between characters. I will argue that the dialogue in *Vile Bodies* mimics the emptiness and speed of innovation, and Waugh blends these characteristics of futurism to create noisy talk short of true communication; furthermore, beyond imitating the technology, dialogue falls apart due to the technological and narrative invention incorporated in the work.

Meaningless Talk and Disconnected Replies

Waugh crafts empty dialogue often by disconnecting what one character says in response to another and fragmenting normal conversation. In scenes at parties and restaurants, where alcohol fuels people's excitement, conversations often lack a conclusion and instead replace it with the suggestion of another drink. Early in the novel, when the story follows characters on the ship, Waugh introduces the reliance on alcohol. Kitty gossips about Mr. Outrage and states, "Yes, but *his* age, and the bull-like type is so often disappointing. Another glass? You will be grateful when the ship begins to move" (8). In the middle of empty talk between Kitty and Fanny, the pouring of more champagne acts as a transition between their gossip and a comment about the ship, even though the suggestion of alcohol adds nothing to their conversation. In a time period that Postman calls the Age of Show Business, here the chime for alcohol acts as a kind of advertisement slogan for drink after drink (63). Furthermore, when Adam and Nina are at the race, Nina insists on breaking normal conversation and activity with her desire for alcohol:

"Darling, we shall miss the start."

"Still a drink *would* be nice."

So they went to the tent. (212)

This dialogue reflects the reliance and conclusiveness of consuming alcohol, for even though Adam suggests getting to the race, the pursuit of a drink ends the conversation. The next phrase begins "So" because the desire to drink cannot be questioned. This reliance appears again between Adam and Lottie:

"Well, tell him I've gone to Manchester."

"That's right dear… What about a glass of wine?" (246)

The dialogue cannot end with Adam's statement or further discussion on the topic, so Lottie offers him a drink to conclude the paragraph. The ellipsis in her sentence implies a pause of boredom and lack of substance within their talk, and Lottie finishes her conversation by offering wine. Used as generic small talk within dialogue, an obsession with alcohol brings emptiness to characters' conversations, just like the emerging catchphrases associated with new advertising technology. It becomes a natural ending step in a conversation and allows characters to avoid thoughtful discussion.

Beyond ending without a meaningful conclusion, characters often do not respond adequately to another. They avoid questions or change the subject of conversation, and, in this way, Waugh removes meaning from these encounters. In one telephone conversation between Adam and Nina, they demonstrate disconnect in their responses:

"Lady to speak to you… Hullo, is that you, Adam?"

"Is that Nina?"

"How are you my darling?"

"*Oh, Nina…*" (76)

Though only a simple phone conversation, neither Adam nor Nina actually respond to each other. Adam answers Nina's inquiry with another question, and he does not discuss how he feels when Nina asks. Like the emptiness and novelty of modern innovation, Adam and Nina appear to connect through a phone call but do not actually understand each other. Nina follows, "'My poor sweet, I feel like that, too'" (76), without complete knowledge of how he feels since Adam does not explain. Adam and Nina's relationship continues to fall apart in their communication throughout the novel:

> "It seems such a waste," she said, thinking of Mary and the Maharajah, "that two very rich people like that should fall in love with each other."
>
> "Nina," said Adam, "let's get married soon, don't you think?" (154)

Though Nina's statement, an observant comment about love she sees in other people, demands explanation, Adam does not give her a chance to explain and instead asserts his own personal thought. The Duchess of Stayle, her husband Andrew, and their daughter Ursula reflect the same meaningless in their own conversations. Though the noble family, mentioned only a handful of times within the novel, lacks deep development, the scene in their home traces dialogue that disconnects like Adam and Nina's conversation. Ursula explains that Edward proposed to her, but she, unexcited about the idea of marriage, declined the offer:

> "Well, I said I wouldn't marry him [Edward] … I'm sorry."
>
> "But my dear, it's nothing to be sorry about. Leave it to your old mother. I'll put it all right for you in the morning." (171)

The Duchess does not respond to her daughter's plea not to marry Edward and instead continues talking as if she will fix the engagement to her husband as well:

> "Aren't you glad?"
>
> "I told you, dear, I'm trying to say my prayers."
>
> "It's a real joy to see the dear children so happy." (171)

Not only does she continue to state that her daughter feels happy when she does not, she also replies to her husband by exclaiming what she wants, unrelated to his prayers. This scene, though unimportant to the main plot between Adam and Nina, reflects the lack of understanding between dialogue that removes true communication from the noise of talk. It models the meaninglessness in machines that Allen describes despite how new technologies run smoothly

and quickly (323). Though the dialogue looks like that of characters fixing a problem, Ursula's family ignores her own anxieties and feelings and any true discussion. Here lies a break in content even though characters do talk and reply, and this emptiness illustrates the deceptive separation of conversation and verbal sound.

Empty Responses through Selfishness

More specifically within Waugh's disconnected dialogue, characters tend to reply with matters of themselves over actually communicating with others. While they may offer a response that does not completely deviate from what another character says, they twist their words to refer back to themselves. This selfishness within conversation empties the interaction of meaning, making it a parody of futuristic emptiness. When Adam gets off the ship and loses his book, he says, "'But do you realize that my whole livelihood depends on this book?'" to which the chief replies, "'And my livelihood depends on stopping works like this coming into the country'" (26). An unforgiving tone from a security chief may be expected, but this brief scene sets up the novel for selfish responses, for the chief offers no verbal sympathy to Adam's situation. In a lunch conversation between Adam and Simon, the two gossip as Simon reflects conversational selfishness:

> "Well, he's some sort of cousin, isn't he?"
>
> "It's so damned unfair. All my cousins are in lunatic asylums or else they live in the country and do indelicate things with wild animals." (105)

Though Adam asks a question, Simon offers a complaint about his own family rather than providing an answer. Before the conversation, the narrator even confirms that the restaurant was full of people who "went there continually and said how awful it was" to show how characters

consistently remove true responsive conversation from talk in turning it toward their own complaints (103). The same disconnect occurs between Agatha and Nina:

"Darling," whispered Miss Runcible, "is my nose awful?"

Nina thought how once, only twenty-four hours ago, she had been in love. (124)

Without a response, Nina removes her thoughts from the conversation and thinks only about herself. She repeats this in a conversation with Adam after he finds out about her relationship with Ginger. Adam asks, "'Well what about me?'" and Nina replies, "'Darling, don't *bully*. Besides, I used to play with Ginger as a child. His hair was a very pretty color then'" (244). While she breaks Adam's heart by turning to another man, Nina ignores Adam's pleas and instead chats about Ginger's hair and her own feelings. Her disconnected replies suggest that she cannot even listen effectively, just as Postman outlines the transition from hours of reading and listening to quick messages for short attention spans (62). Therefore, Nina, like others in the novel, resorts to talking about herself when nothing else seems more important. Though in the form of dialogue, Waugh's noise lacks true connection between one character and another and instead creates a link of empty and selfish words.

Form Dividing and Quickening Dialogue

Along with the emptiness the novel's dialogue creates, other verbal statements produce speed in the choppy way Waugh presents them, another element of futuristic machines that Allen analyzes. When characters use a variety of short words and sentences and take part in brief conversations, the novel moves quickly from scene to scene like the unprecedented modern speed of an automobile or telephone. The form, often seen visually on the page through short lines, enacts the choppiness of the characters' thinking. McLuhan saw this same possibility in stating that "the medium is the message," but while this has the potential for creative good in

presenting information, the characters in *Vile Bodies* rely on form alone, not the mingling of form with meaning (5). In some cases, Waugh replaces conversations with stand-alone statements that withdraw from a dialogue to achieve this speed; they mimic his quick movement from scene to scene which also emulates modern speed. When Nina and Adam discuss the fake check, "after some time," Adam says, "'we shan't be able to get married after all'" (102). The couple then makes multiple pauses in their conversations to make statements:

> Later he said, "I expect that parson thought I was dotty too."
>
> And later. "As a matter of fact, it's rather a good joke, don't you think?" (102)

These statements do not make up a conversation because Adam speaks with only an occasional, slight reply from Nina. In this same section of text once they get in the train, Nina says, "'It's awful to think that I shall probably never, as long as I live, see you dancing like that again all by yourself,'" and the chapter ends (102). Though time passes from when the couple speaks in a room to when they sit in the train, single statements speed up that moment, and the novel leaves out what happens between them. Characters do not engage in lengthy discussions but instead move from shallow topic to topic without true connection. After Adam loses his job as Mr. Chatterbox, another serious topic demanding real discussion, Waugh utilizes choppy single statements to replace conversation:

> "Bad tabulation there," said Lord Monomark next morning, when he saw the paragraph.
>
> *
>
> So Miles Malpractice became Mr. Chatterbox.
>
> *
>
> "Now we can't be married," said Nina. (192)

The sections, separated by asterisks, fragment any dialogue that could have occurred and speed up the time within this moment of Adam's life. Nina makes a statement regarding her own feelings which stands alone, for Waugh constructs each of these lines to be short and easy to digest. The novel disregards any time that people spend with each other and instead moves quickly to the next topic, and this style of dialogue models futuristic speed and provides noise without substance.

Also shortened like stand-alone statements, the overused filler words Waugh includes produce speed throughout the novel. The short phrases, especially when they repeat, speed up conversations, and because they lack communicative meaning, they act as noise to fill up and rush the dialogue. In a conversation with Agatha, Adam describes Nina's new relationship:

"A young man called Ginger."

"*Well?*"

"Don't you remember him?" (239)

Agatha's response of "Well?" does not respond adequately to what Adam tells her, his newest crisis. With her use of a vague word, Agatha responds with what is mindless and easy:

". . . does Nina call him Ginger?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"He asked her to."

"*Well!*" (240)

Now with an exclamation point, Agatha once again uses "Well!" to show her surprise. She does not slow down the conversation to offer a lengthy response, so the short phrase abbreviates a time of crisis. With another repeated phrase, Mr. and Mrs. Florin's conversation speeds up:

"Ah," said Mrs. Florin.

"Times is changed," said Florin, picking a tooth.

"Ah," said Mrs. Florin. (276)

Though Florin chats about the house they visit, Mrs. Florin only offers an "Ah" to his comments. They do not engage in true dialogue, for this "Ah" means nothing and stands in the place of what should be a thoughtful reply. Adding to the repetitive nature of short words, characters such as Ginger and Nina use certain words to fill their dialogue without communicating anything. When Ginger speaks to Adam about his engagement to Nina, he says, "'*well, I mean to say*. After all, I mean, one is a gentleman. It isn't as though you were just a sort of friend of the family isn't it? I mean, you were more or less engaged to her yourself'" (250). He reflects nervousness in the repetition of "I mean," and this phrase becomes simply talking and not true explanation of the situation, a broken engagement replaced by a new one. In the same way, Nina constantly complains about her boredom which takes away true communication from the word "bore" and transforms it into a catchphrase. These filler words become repeated jingles, a transition Postman sees as modern language's movement from truth and elegance to aural ease and catchiness (60). Particularly within the repetition, the short phrases create speed as characters speak thoughtlessly and disregard meaning.

Similar to the suddenness of single statements and repeated short words, dialogue in the novel tends to become staccato and rushes the pace without time for substance. It models language included from the race that Waugh calls "highly technical conversation" about the admired vehicles (201). The phrases wind together as a collection of overheard statements:

". . . Broke both arms and cracked his skull in two places . . ."

". . . Tailwag . . ."

"... Speed-wobble ..."

"... Merc ..."

"... Mag ..."

"... crash ..." (202)

Waugh includes moments of what people say as one would hear them and creates a choppy line of talk with the gibberish of technological terms. Many conversations, like the speed of the cars at the race, model the jumping, staccato nature of this dialogue from one character to another. This style forces characters to speed through conversations with only short contributions rather than long, thoughtful statements. The most staccato conversations occur between Adam and Nina, shown through the choppy back-and-forth nature of their talks:

"We aren't going to be married today?"

"No."

"I see."

"Well?"

"I said, I see."

"Is that all?"

"Yes, that's all, Adam."

"I'm sorry." (234)

Though the hope of marriage ends for the couple, they do not truly discuss their future or new hopes; they simply admit their circumstances and move on with Adam's two-word apology. The form of this dialogue, a narrow line of responses, models the overheard statements about the car race, and the shortness of Adam's and Nina's words speed up the moment, one that deserves

more thought and emotion. In another serious conversation, the staccato nature continues even though Adam seeks to find significance in his life and conversations:

> ". . . I'd give anything in the world for something different."
>
> "Different from me or different from everything?"
>
> "Different from everything . . . only I've got nothing . . . what's the good of talking?"
>
> "Oh, Adam, my dearest . . ."
>
> "Yes?"
>
> "Nothing." (247)

Though Adam approaches meaning in his dialogue and tries to slow down the moment, his discussion with Nina still ends on a staccato nature, each character giving a one-word response. Nina avoids working towards meaning by dodging Adam's inquiry and ending the conversation, and Adam still maintains the choppiness in Waugh's use of ellipses between phrases. No statement here can exist as a full, complete piece of dialogue because characters are animated by modern speed, and Waugh designs his characters to fear gratifying and purposeful communication.

Physical Technology's Disruption

In addition to how Waugh's conversational language mimics the emerging technological burst of the 1920s, the physical technology itself within *Vile Bodies* also disrupts attempts at communication. Just as the jagged collection of noise reflects modern advances in communication and transportation, the incorporation of this technology also breaks up conversations. It distracts characters from communion with others, demands that characters constantly search for entertainment, and removes enjoyment from their lives (Allen 323). Through the *Daily Excess*, Waugh uses the journalists within the new gossip column business to

break up communication. The columns do not present a completely new engineered technology, but they present innovation in how they deliver information to consumers wanting fast, entertaining celebrity gossip. When he introduces one of Simon's conversations, Waugh comically lists Simon's, or Lord Balcairn's, multiple titles and noble lineages and those of Lord Vanburgh to state, "they were both of them, as it happened, gossip writers for the daily papers" (59). Though a seemingly base occupation, the city's established elite are the profiting gossipers, for the idea of this type of paper is innovative and widely distributed. As the novel persists, however, Waugh reveals the emptiness of this writing, especially as Adam becomes Mr. Chatterbox and crafts his own gossip. The narrator explains from Adam's mind, "arguing that people did not really mind *whom* they read about provided that a kind of vicarious inquisitiveness into the lives of others was satisfied, Adam began to invent people" (140). By invention, these gossip columns do not encourage any real communication because they become entertainment out of a purely selfish desire to know others' business. Like the conversations characters do engage in, the tabloid news stories become quick and empty as a piece of technology and the noise of futurism.

To assist the press, photographers, too, destroy true communication and replace it with gossip. Waugh sets a scene in which "Their [photographers'] flashes and bangs had rather a disquieting effect on the party, causing a feeling of tension, because everyone looked negligent and said what a bore the papers were, and how *too* like Archie to let the photographers come" (64). The party becomes a spectacle and forces "tension" among its attendees; the characters do not engage with each other in meaningful conversation but instead consume their minds with wanting "dreadfully to be photographed" or worrying that "their mamas would know where they had been" (64). The photographic technology here replaces the human desire to build

relationships with that to be recognized and achieve a burst of fame, therefore destroying an ability to communicate. The potential of photography within the gossip journals also distracts the writing from actually communicating anything, for in one case, “On the front page was an exquisitely funny photograph of Miss Runcible in Hawaiian costume tumbling down the steps of No. 10 Downing Street” (92). The focus of the main article is Agatha’s ridiculousness, something a camera can communicate more effectively than words alone. Though the medium succeeds in this way, it presents a laughable, empty image with no true value or attempt at communicating ideas. The photographers in *Vile Bodies* seek to capture attention, not display an idea to a listening audience.

Cars, also used as a form of entertainment, distract people from communicating with each other. Particularly in the car race that characters attend, the same scene filled with fragments of technological language, automobiles and their newness become solely a fascination that is empty of value. The narrator comments about “those vital creations of metal who exist solely for their own propulsion through space, for whom their drivers, clinging precariously at the steering wheel, are as important as his stenographer to a stockbroker” (204). To Waugh’s overlooking narrator, the cars exist for speed, a speed still new and entertaining to the novel’s characters and one that distracts them from each other. The characters do not travel to the race to spend time with each other, for “[t]his was no Derby day holiday-making; they had not snatched a day from the office to squander it among gypsies and roundabouts and thimble-and-pea men. They were there for the race” (206). Furthermore, when they do engage with each other, “they discussed the technicalities of motor car design and the possibilities of bloodshed” (206). Like the parties covered by the tabloid press, characters in *Vile Bodies* crave the spectacle of the cars, and, taken by the newness of technological innovation, they desire the dangerous thrill inherent in them.

This entertainment value pulls from their conversations and empties them of attention on another person. Additionally, Waugh uses automobiles to fracture the possibility of conversation in the Major's second escape. When the Major's car begins to move further away from Adam, "[a]ll the drivers seemed to choose this moment to sound their horns . . . 'Adam Symes,' he shouted desperately, but the Major threw up his hands in despair and he disappeared into the crowd" (208). The physical distance and sound multiple cars provide silences Adam's need to converse, and this small scene exemplifies that power in addition to the distraction cars provide. The "noise" of characters' dialogue, which imitates the speed of a car, unites with the physical noise of the cars that destroys conversations.

The telephone provides a closeness beyond physical location like the automobile and, in both its encouragement of short conversations and its disruptive nature, consistently breaks up what should be serious discussions between characters. The ease it provides in speaking to others allows people to connect through technology, but characters also use the telephone to leave in-person conversations abruptly. The Major seeks to spend time speaking to Adam when the latter desires calling Nina:

> "Have a drink, won't you?"
>
> "I said it first."
>
> "Let's both have one, then."
>
> "Wait a minute though, I must go and telephone about this."
>
> He rang up the Ritz and got on to Nina. (53)

In the middle of a conversation with someone else, the telephone allows Adam to excuse himself from the person in front of him to call Nina at the Ritz. While the phone call breaks up his communication with someone else, the phone can also disturb the call's recipient:

At luncheon time next day Adam rang up Nina.

"Nina, darling, are you awake?"

"Well, I wasn't . . ."

"Listen, do you really want me to go and see your papa today?" (173)

To open a new chapter, Adam begins with a forced conversation in which he interrupts the natural progression of Nina's to comment about his day. Not only does the phone emphasize the choppy, quick conversations that reflect the speed of technology, but the telephone itself also enforces these conversations. The same interruption occurs between Mr. Outrage and Baroness Yoshiwara, both anxious about what the other thinks about them. The narrator, inside the mind of Outrage, notes, "just before the telephone rang . . . there had been *something* in the air" (56). In response to the interruption, the Baroness thinks, "What did the clever Englishman want? If he was busy with the telephone, why did he not send her away; tell her another time to come: if he wanted to be loved, why did he not tell her to come over to him?" (57). The two, already struggling to communicate clearly before, now remain distanced in their thoughts and confused about the intent of the other. The physical technology again contributes to the distance in communication in how it allows distraction from a current moment. In an era transitioning from a reliance on reading and listening to a reliance on technology, the characters' attentions are inconsistent and quick to this distraction (Postman 61). However, not only do the abstraction, newness, and emptiness inherent in technology alone model the behavior, the new inventions constantly pull characters away from conversation and interrupt their lives.

The Narrator as Another Technology

Just as technological innovation degrades meaningful conversations, Waugh's narrative innovation in the snide remarks and explanatory asides of his narrator reveal the broken

communication of novel's characters. This narrator appears nowhere inside the novel's scenes yet seems to be present everywhere as he pulls apart characters' behavior and breaks down the culture they experience. In order to accomplish this, the narrator immediately asserts his voice as the cleverest voice in the novel and the best at communication. Early in the novel in a stand-alone paragraph, the narrator describes the people on the ship to London and explains, "Other prominent people were embarking, all very unhappy about the weather; to avert the terrors of seasickness they had indulged in every kind of civilized witchcraft, but they were lacking in faith" (6). With the goal of setting the scene, Waugh's narrator pulls out humor in people's behavior and empty, complaining conversations with a witty and reasonable observation of their superstitions. Not only does the narrator create a humorous, snarky tone, but he also establishes an intelligence that allows for more efficient communication than any of the characters he describes. He continues to mock the characters phrases and conversations:

> "Do you know, I rather think I'm going to be sick again?"
>
> "Oh, Miles!"
>
> (Oh, Bright Young People!) (31)

In his reply to Agatha and Adam's conversation, the narrator mocks Adam's "Oh," and the parentheses reflect the snide nature of his aside. He mocks the "Bright Young People" to sarcastically point out their flawed conversation in case the reader does not catch on to their emptiness already. In the critical, jarring tone Waugh incorporates, the narrator becomes a new technology of the modern novel by highlighting the poor ways in which characters converse.

Through a clear knowledge of the novel's scenes, Waugh's narrator must clarify what the characters fail to deliver on their own. The overlooking narrator comments on what exactly each party entails and even why certain characters think the way they do, thereby providing more

efficient communication than the characters do. While the narrator paints every scene through impersonal descriptions, he also, often through parentheses, speaks directly to the reader to explain something only known within this specific social crowd. During a party, the narrator explains, "(Unless specified in detail, all drinks are champagne in Lottie's parlor. There is also a mysterious game played with dice which always ends with someone giving a bottle of wine to everyone in the room)" (46). With an air of importance, the narrator breaks down the scene to describe its elegance and abundance of wine, and this tone highlights the empty nature of the party that lacks enlightening conversation. Furthermore, the narrator objects during the gathering that "(It must be remembered in all these people's favor that none of them had yet dined)" (49). While the comment gives characters credit for their drunken conversations, the narrator almost whispers into the ear of the reader to make sure he or she knows what goes on. Here lies the power of the narrator's communication, juxtaposed with the silliness and lack of conversation between the novel's characters, to inform the reader of what happens in the scene with a pretentious, mocking tone. The characters in the novel cannot stand alone in explaining their world and their motivations; Waugh's narrator sets *Vile Bodies* up as a parody to reflect the distractions and superficiality of the "roaring" generation.

Conclusion: Resulting and Lasting Tension

Though characters in *Vile Bodies* often talk lengthily about the parties they attend and the latest tabloid stories, their conversations over meaningful and serious topics grow empty and short-winded. Love, heartbreak, occupations, and pain are the subjects that demand authentic discussion, yet characters simply talk to create "noise" and move past significant moments. Waugh emphasizes, through parody and dark humor, the ironic union of progress and meaninglessness, for technology including that of widely distributed daily journalism and

dangerous automobiles tears apart characters' lives. McLuhan reflects on the potential of technology to communicate more efficiently than ever before, but Waugh's characters appear to abuse such potential; the characters focus on talk within their social spheres, talk empty of content and attention on genuine community. Postman confirms this emptiness with his own analysis of the modern age in which humanity has stripped down language into soundbites. Tension thrives between these two theories: the creative, prosperous ability modern technology has to transform dialogue and the harmful emphasis on high-tech media over intelligent content. In Adam and his desire for something different from his own world, Waugh's novel does not solve this tension but allows for it. Adam sees a need for value within the words he says, yet the modernization of the world around him exchanges conversation for noise.

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Essay

Benjamin Crabtree

The Disillusioned Dream of the Masses: 1960s Counterculture, Montage, and the Road Motif in *Pierrot le Fou* and *Easy Rider*

Introduction

Throughout the 1960s, both the United States and France experienced an abundance of sociopolitical and cultural change influenced by post-World War II anxieties, fears of Cold War annihilation, the rise of female and minority voices in a primarily patriarchal world, and growing resistance to the Vietnam War. The driving force of this change was a youth-centered counterculture, which resisted traditionalist ideals in favor of racial and gender equality, freedom of expression, sexual liberty, and liberal political perspectives concerning social reform and the war in Vietnam. Simultaneously, the rising young filmmakers of the French New Wave and the New Hollywood used cinema to promote counterculture. French directors employed revolutionary techniques, including discontinuity editing and montage, to subvert the narrative traditions of classic cinema; this allowed auteurs to express the need for young French women and men to disrupt the constructs of "everyday life" in order to uncover the revolutionary "true life," replacing collective idealism with individualism (Süner 124). Similarly, American filmmakers applied formal experimentation from the French New Wave to the American sociopolitical discourse of the 1960s, reinventing Hollywood to mirror the counterculture.

As the cinematic landscape altered to reflect and influence the sociopolitical change during the 1960s, certain auteurs used revolutionary film techniques to craft countercultural

masterpieces. Jean-Luc Godard and Dennis Hopper were two of the most influential proponents of change in the cinema of France and the United States, respectively. From his first feature film, *Breathless* (1960), to the subversive swan song of the French New Wave, *Weekend* (1967), Jean-Luc Godard experimented with cinematic language to reflect the frenetic nature of the revolutionary youth culture in 1960s France. The central film of Godard's Nouvelle Vague filmography, *Pierrot le Fou* (1965), is a revisionist road trip movie, which focuses on the doomed journey of a rebellious young couple from the consumerist confines of Paris to the French countryside (Süner 129). Similarly, American director, actor, and *enfant terrible* Dennis Hopper centered his mutinous manifesto *Easy Rider* (1969) on the disillusioned road trip of Wyatt and Billy from the countercultural center of California to the hippy-hating hub of the Deep South. In addition to employing the editing techniques of the French New Wave, costar Peter Fonda said that Hopper used "cinema verité in allegory terms" to create a raw, realistic vision of youth counterculture in late 1960s America (qtd. in Biskind 69).

In both *Pierrot le Fou* and *Easy Rider*, the films subvert the expectations of the road motif through the protagonists' countercultural experiences to demonstrate the disillusionment of French and American national identity throughout the 1960s. In order to emphasize the futility of the road motif, *Pierrot le Fou* and *Easy Rider* utilize Sergei Eisenstein's theory of dialectical montage and discontinuity editing to disassemble the linear road motif in order to accentuate the fragmented nature of their countercultural journeys; this editing-driven fragmentation also emphasizes the chaos and nihilism of the counterculture itself. Both films reject Golden Age cinematic language for revolutionary film techniques to express the rebellious—and often brutal—actions of the countercultural youth. The protagonists at the center of both films

represent and critique the countercultural youth through acts of violence, stylistic self-expression, and the nihilistic conclusions of their frenetic journeys.

Defining Counterculture in France and the United States

In order to properly understand counterculture within the cinema of France and the United States, it is necessary to establish cinema's ability to comment on sociopolitical issues within a specific film's historical context. According to film theorist André Bazin, the ability for cinema to create a social discourse within a specific historical moment allows the possibility that "every film can be considered a social documentary" as it "satisf[ies] the dream desires of the masses, [and] becomes its own dream" (40). In the case of the cinema of the 1960s, counterculture is "the dream of the masses" that allows films including *Pierrot le Fou* and *Easy Rider* to formulate "[their] own dream[s];" unfortunately, "the dream" of counterculture is disillusioned from the start within these films, eventually leading to the nihilistic demise of both films' protagonists (40). Nevertheless, these films serve as useful "social documentaries," as they express the disillusionment of counterculture (40).

While Bazin's work provides a clear foundation for uncovering "the dream of the masses" within a specific historical context, it is essential to engage with New Historicism to fully assess the nature of film as a "social documentary" and historical artifact (Bazin 40). New Historicism, as defined by literary theorists Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, aims to "integrate historical and literary interpretation, generate powerful new readings and survive the withering critiques leveled at [the work of literature] from the outside" (3). By "interpret[ing]" film within its "historical context," an individual will better understand both the sociocultural influences on the film and cinema's influence on human culture and social interaction (3). Furthermore, Gallagher and Greenblatt argue that "the mutual embeddedness of art and history

underlies our fascination with the possibility of treating all of the written and visual traces of a particular culture as a mutually intelligible network of signs" (7). *Pierrot le Fou* and *Easy Rider* contain "a mutually intelligible network of signs" within their formal framework that reflects the "particular culture," or counterculture, of France and the United States in the 1960s (7).

Ahmet Süner addresses Jean-Luc Godard's cinematic response to the identity crisis that plagued post-occupation France using the "mutually intelligible network of signs" found in Godard's films of the French New Wave (Süner 123-24, Gallagher and Greenblatt 7). In post-World War II France, the majority of individuals in the older generations, especially men, were anxious concerning the displacement of French national identity and "the modern everyday" by "the spectacular signs of postwar modernity" including: "cars, the modern household, traffic, as well as American movies" (Süner 123).[1] Young French women and men created a new national identity known as "la vraie vie" or "the real life" (124). Interestingly, the word *vraie* translates more directly to the English word *true*, which I will use throughout my argument instead of the term *real* (124). The term *real* in this context is broad and undefined, as it only vaguely underscores the importance of reinventing "the everyday;" the word *true* signifies that the prior way of life, driven by patriarchy and capitalism, was false and must be corrected (123-24). The young generation's pursuit of "the true life" empowers them to formulate a new culture of

[1] In addition to Godard, French auteur Jacques Tati combined satire and physical comedy to critique the consumerist culture of mid-twentieth century France in films such as: *Mon Oncle* (1958), *Playtime* (1967), and *Trafic* (1971). Also, comedic director Pierre Etaix's *As Long as You've Got Your Health* (1966) satirizes French consumerism in a collection of four short films, each of which parodies television advertisements and product placement.

gender and racial equality, acceptance of socialist political and economic ideologies, and artistic expression (123-25). Therefore, French counterculture is defined as the youth-driven "reinvention, critique, and destruction of the everyday" to pursue "the true life," which is founded upon individual identity and the liberty of self-expression (123-24).

In many capacities, the counterculture of the United States mirrored France's counterculture, especially concerning equality and expression; however, America's counterculture was a collective movement rather than a personal pursuit of individual identity and ideologies. Bert Cardullo comments on the reasons behind America's collective counterculture and its effect on the film industry: "Changes in the United States connected with sex, race, gender, and class . . . that is, with anti-authoritarianism directed at the patriarchal 'Establishment'— had, inevitably, changed the tone of [America's] film industry" (86). The patriarchal older generation's resistance empowered the American youth to create a counterculture centered on a collective acceptance of new social norms including equality, sexual liberty, anti-Vietnam mindsets, drug culture, and artistic expression (86). The American counterculture served as a catalyst for raw depictions of violence and sexuality and formal experimentation in American cinema, representing the revolutionary liberation and open-minded perspectives that characterized the nation's youth in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Dialectical Montage as Counterculture

While understanding sociopolitical and historical context is essential for achieving a more complete interpretation of a film, one must also analyze the cinematic form to fully understand key elements of the film's narrative. During both the French New Wave and the New Hollywood, young auteurs experimented with new techniques of editing and montage and created a new filmic language by rebelling against classical cinematic techniques. Prior to the

1960s, the most significant group to experiment with editing was the founding filmmakers of Soviet cinema in the 1920s and 1930s (Eisenstein 296-98). In his essay “Montage 1938,” Soviet auteur and film theorist Sergei Eisenstein created dialectical montage, which was a form of editing that used a collision of “two sequences” of film to create “a third something,” which possessed a “qualitatively new” meaning (296, 298). While the first “two sequences” each possess an individual meaning, the “juxtaposition of two pieces of glued together film” create a “product” with greater collective meaning, which “differs *qualitatively* (in dimension, or if you like in degree) from each constituent element taken separately” (296-97). “The product” of greater meaning created by the first “two sequences” is known as “the third-something” because it is different from the meaning of the first two shots but requires the individual meanings of the first two shots to be complete (296-97).

The idea of “a third something” is not only cinematic; New Historicist theorist Clifford Geertz discusses the importance of creating a new meaning out of smaller units of meaning in a manner similar to Eisenstein’s montage: “Analysis is sorting out the structures of signification . . . and determining their social ground and import” (qtd. in Gallagher and Greenblatt 20). In the case of montage, the “two [juxtaposed] sequences” are “the structures of signification,” while the “third something” is “their social ground and import” (Eisenstein 296, qtd. in Gallagher and Greenblatt 20). Within the context of the Soviet Revolution, auteurs, including Lev Kuleshov and Eisenstein himself, utilized the “juxtaposition of two sequences” to express a sociopolitical (and unfortunately propagandistic) “third something” that empowered individuals to fight for the Soviet cause; this montage-driven call to arms created a youth-centered counterculture through

films including Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), demonstrating the power of montage to create a literal movement as its "third something" (Eisenstein 296, Thomson 87).[2]

Although the Soviets utilized montage to create cinematic propaganda, the auteurs of the French New Wave and the New Hollywood refined the sociopolitical nature of montage to provide commentary and criticism concerning cultural issues in 1960s France and America. In *Pierrot le Fou* and his other films of the Nouvelle Vague, Jean-Luc Godard understood the individualistic counterculture of the French youth (Süner 123-25, Kaufmann 26); therefore, he engaged with Eisenstein's idea "that the spectator draws certain conclusion[s] when faced with the juxtaposition of two pieces of glued-together film" (Eisenstein 297). Rather than focusing on the collectivism of Soviet montage, Godard used montage as a means of individual interpretation of sociocultural ideas to create a better understanding of "the true life" throughout Ferdinand and Marianne's road trip (Süner 124-26, Eisenstein 297).

Godard utilizes dialectical montage to showcase the couple's break from "the modern every day" to pursue "the true life" as they begin their run from the law after murdering their friend Frank (Süner 123-24). Throughout the montage, a voice-over of Marianne and Ferdinand relays "a story all mixed up," which relates their violent actions to Marianne's brother's experience in the Algerian War (00:22:01-00:22:36). In order to formally illustrate "[the] story

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[2] In addition to Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*, Lev Kuleshov's lesser-known film *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* (1924) combined satirical comedy with dialectical montage to critique the American perspective of the Bolshevik Revolution and inspire young Russians to resist American media for countercultural Bolshevik media, information, and ideologies (Thomson 78).

all mixed up," Godard combines discontinuity editing with Eisensteinian dialectical montage to heighten the chaos of their countercultural adventure. Simultaneously, every jump cut in the montage breaks the 180-degree rule, making it seem as if they are going in circles, which foreshadows the futility of their escape and subsequent journey to the Riviera.

The montage opens with a medium shot of Marianne escaping from the safe house with an American-made rifle, followed by a jump cut to Ferdinand entering the red Peugeot, a French car, that Marianne stole with the same rifle (00:22:01). These shots illustrate the countercultural youth's use of consumer objects to destroy the French "everyday," just as Ferdinand and Marianne killed Frank, the film's embodiment of mainstream culture, with the American rifle; this parallels Godard's use of cinema as a tool for disassembling the established structure of French cinema throughout the New Wave (Süner 123). Simultaneously, Ferdinand and Marianne's use of the red Peugeot as their escape vehicle signifies the countercultural youth's use of French consumerist objects as an avenue of individual escape from mainstream culture, similar to the use of cinema as a method of creating counterculture during the French New Wave.

In addition to utilizing American weapons and French consumerist objects as avenues of escape from French society, Ferdinand and Marianne harness their individual experiences and education to combat mainstream culture with counterculture in a conflict "like the Algerian War" (00:22:07). A jump cut reveals a medium-long shot of Ferdinand and Marianne escaping the apartment (00:22:06). While Marianne is escaping with the aforementioned rifle, Ferdinand is clutching a French book, signifying his use of personal education as a weapon against the consumerist culture. The juxtaposition of this shot and an establishing shot of the red Peugeot driving through Paris, the center of French government and culture, produce the "third-

something": that the countercultural youth must wield the weapons of individual intellect and personal education to overcome "the modern everyday" (00:22:07, Süner 123). Through this sequence of shots, Godard envisions a militant version of counterculture, as individuals must use their intellect, and occasionally physical action, to defend the ideologies of the counterculture and their pursuit of "the true life" (Süner 124).

As Ferdinand and Marianne continue their pursuit of individual freedom through counterculture, a jump cut shows a medium-long shot of Ferdinand and Marianne escaping onto the roof (00:22:08). Another jump cut reveals a point-of-view shot of two identically dressed French agents entering the building to kill them (00:22:10). These shots depict the desire of the older generation to impose uniformity onto the countercultural youth by destroying anyone or anything that resists mainstream culture. While these two shots indicate mainstream culture's attempt to destroy counterculture through uniformity, the following three shots showcase the reflexive, individualized nature of French counterculture. After a medium-long shot of Ferdinand and Marianne looking down toward the ground, a jump cut shows a medium shot of Ferdinand jumping to the ground with the gun and book in his hands (00:22:11). Once Ferdinand helps Marianne to the ground, another jump cut reveals a medium-long, bird's-eye-view shot of Ferdinand entering the red Peugeot as Marianne drives away (00:22:17). The juxtaposition of these shots highlights their awareness of their need to escape French culture for a personal counterculture, as they appear to be voyeurs of their own departure. A voice-over of Ferdinand saying, "It was time to leave that rotten world anyway," accompanies the bird's-eye-view shot, emphasizing the need to transcend French culture to join the counterculture.

The final group of shots shows that Ferdinand and Marianne finally escape Paris and begin their journey on the road. A final establishing shot of the red Peugeot passing the Eiffel

Tower in Paris, accompanied by Marianne saying, “We left Paris on a one-way street,” emphasizes the protagonists’ flight from the geographical center of French culture toward the countercultural “true life” in the periphery of the Riviera (00:22:19, Süner 123-24). A match cut from the car driving alongside the Eiffel Tower, a symbol of modernity and consumer-driven tourism, to the car driving next to the French Statue of Liberty signifies Ferdinand and Marianne’s escape from “the modern everyday” to the freedom of finding counterculture throughout their road trip (Süner 123, 00:22:27). The conclusion of this scene begins *Pierrot le Fou*’s use of the road motif as the car leaves Paris and stops at a gas station to fill up the car (00:22:36). However, the fact that Ferdinand and Marianne must fill up their Peugeot, a French consumerist product, with *Total* fuel, another French consumerist product, ironically undermines their journey; “the spectacular signs of postwar modernity” that they are trying to escape from are necessary for them to pursue their individualistic counterculture, emphasizing the futility of their road trip (Süner 123).

The Road Motif in *Pierrot le Fou* and *Easy Rider*

While the dialectical montage of the French New Wave focused on individual perspectives of France’s counterculture, auteurs in the United States used montage to express the collective counterculture (Cardullo 86). America’s counterculture was centered on a unified acceptance of diversified perspectives and artistic expression, which encouraged interpretation of the collective social issues reflected in cinema. Eisenstein admits that dialectical montage initially sought to uncover a unified “third something” centered on the Soviet cause; however, as he progressed in his methods of montage from his initial propaganda pieces of the 1920s to more artistic films of the 1930s, he recognized the equally individualistic potential of montage: “In arriving at the *result*, a work of art directs all the subtlety of its methods towards the *process*. A

work of art, understood dynamically, is also a process of forming images in the mind of the spectator" (Eisenstein 302). Through the "*process*" of Eisensteinian montage, both Hopper and Godard subvert the road motif to "arriv[e] at the *result*" of the disillusionment of counterculture and identity in 1960s America and France (302).

Before the opening montage of *Easy Rider*, Hopper establishes the protagonist's countercultural identities as they prepare for their revisionist road trip. Rather than celebrating the freedom of the American road like other road trip films of the 1960s, *Easy Rider* revises the road motif to critique capitalism and mainstream culture. Through a series of long takes in the opening scene, the camera uses close-up shots to introduce Wyatt, Billy, and their motorcycles (00:05:41-00:06:33). Wyatt owns an American Flag motorcycle, signifying his use of the American system as a vehicle for his personal desires and selfish endeavors. Billy's flame-covered bike foreshadows the eventual annihilation of the characters and the counterculture at the end of the film. This establishing sequence prior to the opening montage ends with a long take, which pans up from an extreme close-up of a tube full of money to a close-up of Wyatt shoving money from their deal into the tube (00:06:01-00:06:14). After the tube is completely full of money and sealed, a jump cut reveals a close-up of the gas tank as Wyatt shoves the tube of money into his American flag motorcycle, suggesting that capitalism fuels the engine of America (00:06:15).

After establishing the film's central protagonists through a series of long takes, the opening credit sequence of *Easy Rider* utilizes dialectical montage to express counterculture by showcasing the beginning of Wyatt and Billy's journey from California to New Orleans (00:07:00-00:09:21). Wyatt and Billy's road trip begins with an establishing shot of the driveway outside of their garage, which is the first and only concrete idea of home for the protagonists in

the film (00:07:00). Wyatt and Billy's departure from home for their road trip mirrors Ferdinand and Marianne's flight from the safe house after they murder Frank, emphasizing the necessary action of abandoning the home for the road. According to Joe Lawrence, "the trip of Captain America and Billy from the West to the East is the reversal of the American 'Westering' motif," which sets their journey apart as a subversion of the journey of the cowboy in the nineteenth century frontier and the Western cinematic genre (Lawrence 665, Asquith 26). Hopper's "reversal of the American 'Westering' motif" inverts the westward journey toward freedom, as the protagonists travel toward the geographic center of the American past—the East (Lawrence 665). The camera pans to follow Wyatt as he joins Billy, who is dressed like the eponymous Western outlaw Billy the Kid, in front of two monolithic stones in the desert (00:07:02). These two stones signify the death of the old generation, as Wyatt and Billy displace the grave-like monoliths in the frame; simultaneously, the "gravestones" tower over the two figures, highlighting the disillusionment of their idealistic journey and the counterculture, both of which will end in annihilation (Asquith 26, 00:07:07). According to Mark Asquith, Wyatt and Billy's "journey of disillusionment" represents "the journey from oppression to freedom in a spirit symbolized by such figures as the cowboy" (Asquith 26). Nevertheless, Wyatt and Billy's impending annihilation underscores their rebellious road trip similar to the outlaws of the Old West and the Western cinematic genre (26).

As we see this powerful juxtaposition of the idealistic youth and the death of old ideals, Wyatt removes his watch (00:07:12). Suddenly, a jump cut reveals a close-up of Wyatt's face as he looks at the watch and throws it to the ground (00:07:16); another jump cut reveals the watch resting on the desert ground (00:07:18). These two shots produce a "third something" that illustrates Wyatt and Billy's rejection of the sociocultural systems, even the system of time, that

govern human behavior and interaction (Eisenstein 296). After these two close-ups, a medium shot pans into a long shot of Wyatt and Billy riding off into the desert void to begin their journey, emphasizing the emptiness of their endeavor as they reject sociocultural standards (00:07:28).

With the initial roar of Steppenwolf's anthem "Born to be Wild," a jump cut showcases a medium shot of Wyatt driving his motorcycle (00:07:42); a match cut reveals Billy riding alongside Wyatt followed by a camera pan to include Billy in the frame (00:07:45). The following establishing shot of two bridges over the Colorado River reveal another "third something" about the protagonists (00:07:52). Similar to the manner in which the two bridges over the Colorado River seem intertwined as one unit, Wyatt and Billy unite their countercultural perspectives to overcome traditionalist ideals in favor of the liberal ideologies of the youth (00:07:52). The following two sets of shots repeat the dialectic of Wyatt, Billy, and the two bridges to further emphasize their unity in the counterculture (00:07:55-00:08:09). These sets of shots start a trend that continues throughout the remainder of the sequence; every jump cut breaks the 180-degree rule, making it seem as if they are driving in circles, which accentuates the nihilistic futility of their journey from the start (00:07:52-00:09:21).

A jump cut reveals the protagonists exiting the bridge and rounding a corner to merge onto a new highway (00:08:14); the first four seconds of this long shot obscures the protagonists from the camera's view behind the black wall of the bridge's end, signifying that the forces unifying Wyatt and Billy, both the bridges and counterculture, are also obscuring them from their ultimate goal and their target audience (00:08:14). Once Wyatt and Billy drive around the curve, a set of three long shots of the duo riding towards the camera, away from the camera, and towards the camera again reveal the "third something" of the futility of their journey, as they

appear to be going in circles due to the disregard of the 180-degree rule (00:08:32-00:08:40). A jump cut interrupts this circular sequence to reveal a point-of-view shot of an overpass, placing the audience in the protagonists' position (00:08:48). This shot signifies that Wyatt and Billy represent the audience, which was primarily composed of the countercultural youth.[3]

After the highway-driving sequence, the montage quickly concludes their first day of travel by destroying the traditionalist vision of American idealism and patriotism (00:08:50-00:09:21). A jump cut reveals Billy riding in front Wyatt through a small town, which subverts the order of the scene (00:08:50). Billy's displacement of Wyatt within the frame signifies the displacement of American culture by the modern outlaws—the countercultural youth—as Billy, who is dressed as an outlaw, blocks Captain America and his patriotic paraphernalia from view. A close-up of a statue of Paul Bunyan followed by a jump cut to a lingering medium shot of a "Vacant" sign at a local hotel further critique American idealism; this series of shots signify that traditional symbols of American values, including the flag and Paul Bunyan, are "vacant" of meaning and value in the era of the Vietnam War and counterculture (00:08:52). The following series of three shots highlights Wyatt and Billy's entrapment on the American road and, therefore, within the counterculture (00:09:01-00:09:05). The first two shots in this sequence are

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[3] As he was making *Easy Rider*, Dennis Hopper hoped to connect with the American youth by portraying realistic, relatable characters similar to the members of the collective counterculture: "Nobody had ever seen themselves portrayed in a movie. At every love-in across the country people were smoking grass and dropping LSD, while audiences were still watching Doris Day and Rock Hudson" (qtd. in Biskind 52). Rather than creating an escapist film to merely entertain an audience, Hopper directly involved the audience within the cinematic experience.

medium shots showing Wyatt and Billy slowing down and speeding up through the small town, expressing their indecision between staying at the hotel in the small town or moving on to (hopefully) find lodging further down the road (00:09:01). The final shot in this sequence, a medium shot of trains moving down the tracks, reveal the "third something" that Wyatt and Billy are attached to the road and counterculture similar to a train's attachment to the tracks.

The final sequence of three shots in the opening montage secures the audience as members of Wyatt and Billy's journey, and provides the overarching "third something" of the montage. The first shot is a low-facing close-up of the road, which pans up to reveal a long shot of *Easy Rider*'s central characters riding past the camera (00:09:07); this shot solidifies the audience's place following the protagonists on their countercultural journey. Next, an establishing shot pans to follow the bikers riding through an unfamiliar, mountainous terrain, signifying that Wyatt and Billy are the countercultural pioneers of a new American frontier (0:09:13). A jump cut reveals the final shot, which is completely dark except for two headlights from Wyatt and Billy's motorcycles and a neon gas station sign that says "76" (00:09:21). Immediately, "76" recalls 1776, the year when America declared independence; the glow of the "76" sign in the midst of the darkness signifies the ultimate "third something" of the opening montage—the death of American patriotism in the face of the Vietnam War (00:09:21).

While *Easy Rider*'s opening dialectical montage demonstrates the rise of countercultural values through the road motif and the disillusionment of their journey from the start, *Pierrot le Fou* uses a series of discontinuous long takes to accentuate the disillusionment of the road and individualistic counterculture that Ferdinand and Marianne represent. According to Wendy Everett, the European road film "represent[s] postmodern identity as essentially fluid and migratory, as an on-going process that is both constructed and articulated through our individual

temporal and spatial journeys" (Everett 166). While the dialectical montage in *Pierrot le Fou* formally expresses the disillusioned fragmentation of identity on the countercultural road, this sequence of discontinuous long takes highlights the frenetic "on-going process" of identity formation throughout the protagonist's journey (166). After a brief stop in a small village to make money for gas, the couple discovers a surrealistic car wreck in the middle of a field, featuring an isolated segment of a highway overpass and a vertically crashed, blue Ford Galaxy (00:29:44). The isolated piece of an overpass represents the fragmentation of identity on the road, while the crashed Ford Galaxy foreshadows the nihilistic demise of the protagonists.

As Ferdinand and Marianne approach the accident, both characters decide that they should fake their own deaths by setting their car on fire next to the crashed vehicle (00:30:06). In a long take of a medium-long shot, Ferdinand maneuvers the red Peugeot next to the vertical vehicle to make their crash "look real" (00:30:13). Throughout this long take, the deep-focus cinematography lingers on a singular dead woman draped over the mangled door of the car. The dead individual signifies the nihilistic fate of the protagonists and their counterculture, as the vehicle of freedom led to the demise of the individual (00:30:17). In a jump cut forward in time to a medium shot, Marianne shoots the Peugeot with "the same make [of the gun] that killed Kennedy" (00:30:33); this reference exemplifies "the mutual embeddedness of art and history" that establishes this film as a "social documentary" (Gallagher and Greenblatt 7, Bazin 40).[4]

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[4] Marianne's reference to the Kennedy assassination expresses the countercultural destruction of cultural constructs, just as Lee Harvey Oswald assassinated Kennedy, one of the most famous political and cultural figures of the 1960s.

Furthermore, the burning car contains the money that Marianne and Ferdinand needed to make it to the Riviera, emphasizing their disillusioned journey toward an individualistic counterculture.

In the final long take of the sequence, Godard solidifies Ferdinand and Marianne's nihilistic fate as they continue their isolated journey on the road toward oblivion. The long take opens with a deep-focus, extreme-long shot of the isolated overpass, vertical Ford Galaxy, and burning Peugeot in the field (00:31:09). As the shot progresses, the camera slowly pans to follow Ferdinand and Marianne as they walk away from the destroyed road into the empty field. As the two characters walk into the void, the overpass remains in the right side of the frame, shrouded in smoke, signifying the hazy, nihilistic disillusionment of the road (00:32:09).[5] In many ways, this scene directly foreshadows the ending, complete with a similar use of panning into an empty landscape, encapsulating the nihilistic void at the end of the road (01:49:07).

Countercultural Central Characters

While the road motif showcases the subversive experiences of the protagonists and disillusionment of the counterculture and national identity in *Pierrot le Fou* and *Easy Rider*, both

[5] This sequence closely mirrors the visual style of Michelangelo Antonioni, an Italian contemporary of Godard. Similar to Godard's emphasis on isolation through this extreme long shot characterized by empty mise-en-scène, Antonioni's "trilogy of isolation," made up of *L'avventura* (1960), *La Notte* (1961), and *L'eclisse* (1962), conclude with extreme-long shots of the central duos isolated within the vast void of an empty landscape, highlighting the nihilistic emptiness of postmodern society. Similarly, the final shot of Antonioni's first English language film, *Blow-Up* (1966), closely mirrors this shot from *Pierrot le Fou*, overtly expressing the emptiness of artistic expression and counterculture in the 1960s.

sets of protagonists embody and critique the countercultural youth through personal expression and their nihilistic deaths at the end of their road trips. In *Pierrot le Fou*, Ferdinand and Marianne represent the individualist counterculture through art and acts of violence against the French culture. In *Easy Rider*, Wyatt and Billy "represent freedom" and the collective counterculture of the United States by dressing like stereotypical symbols of American liberty (Asquith 26). Furthermore, both films use dialectical montage to define the central characters as disjointed expressions of their countries' countercultures and national identities.

Godard's first use of dialectical montage in *Pierrot le Fou* showcases Ferdinand and Marianne as a countercultural couple pursuing "the true life" within the context of France in the 1960s (Süner 124). After a night of infidelity and murder in a gun-filled safe house, Ferdinand and Marianne prepare their next move as they run away from the monotonous and consumerist "modern everyday" (123). The montage begins with a close-up of Marianne's face followed by a match cut to a close-up of a painting by Pierre-Auguste Renoir (00:19:16).[6] Just as Impressionist art focused on the importance of individual identity and personal perspectives, this match cut signifies Marianne's individualism; while Marianne and the Renoir painting possess "structures of signification" from French culture and style, they are both made up of individual taste and

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[6] In his debut film, *Breathless*, Jean-Luc Godard juxtaposes Patricia, the film's female protagonist, with an Impressionist painting of a young girl by Pierre-Auguste Renoir, signifying her individualism through artistic expression (00:36:00). This established Godard's on-going motif of comparing French individuals with Impressionist art, which reappears in *Contempt* (1963), *Pierrot le Fou* (1965), and *Made in the USA* (1966).

experiences (qtd. in Gallagher and Greenblatt 20).[7] While she shapes her own countercultural perspectives through personal experiences, she must overcome the French "everyday" in order to attain "the true life" (Süner 123-24).

As Marianne attempts to find a way to disrupt "the modern everyday," she and Ferdinand discuss whether or not they should murder Frank, Ferdinand's friend and Marianne's lover, who represents the French "everyday" (Süner 123). In a close-up of an Impressionist painting of a rebellious, rich boy, Ferdinand is equated with a young man breaking from his entrapment within the monotonous "modern everyday," just as Ferdinand leaves his family and middle-class Parisian life to join Marianne on the road (00:19:19). As the montage progresses, the painting of the young boy is repeated, juxtaposed between two close-up shots of other impressionist paintings of young women (00:19:21-00:19:24). By intertwining a voice-over conversation between Ferdinand and Marianne with Impressionist paintings of French youth, the film conveys the reflexive nature of art and individual identity in 1960s France. While each painting embodies the artist's impression of a specific French individual, Ferdinand and Marianne reflect their unique countercultural identities through their personal subversion of French cultural norms.

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[7] Furthermore, this match cut relates Marianne Renoir with Impressionist painter Pierre-Auguste Renoir, one of two individuals after whom Marianne is named; the other individual is French auteur, and son of the Impressionist artist, Jean Renoir. Jean Renoir is considered "The Father of French Cinema." He focused on using realism to depict French history and culture on film through films including *The Grand Illusion* (1937) and *The Rules of the Game* (1939) (Thomson 150-51). Through the relationship with both Renoirs, Marianne becomes a figure caught between individual impression and the reality of French art and culture.

While Impressionist painters utilized art as their avenue for reflection on French individual identity, Ferdinand and Marianne express their countercultural individualism through violence against members of the mainstream French culture. After the images of the Impressionist paintings, a jump cut reveals a close-up of two guns, two rounds of ammo, a book about Al Capone, and a blood red lantern (00:19:26). These props signify Marianne and Ferdinand's violent resistance of the culture, as they rebel against the laws and norms of French society like Al Capone's countercultural crimes in Prohibition-era America. In order to further emphasize the couple's violent subversion of French culture, another jump cut shows a dead man, lying on a blue bed, covered in blood (00:19:35). The dead man is dressed in clothes typical of a French businessman in the 1960s, highlighting Ferdinand and Marianne's destruction of the French "Establishment" in order to assert their countercultural individualism (Cardullo 86). Furthermore, the long shot of the dead man on the bed is accompanied by a voice-over of Marianne saying, "Wake from a bad dream," which emphasizes the irony of Marianne and Ferdinand's pursuit of "the true life" by murdering members of the "Establishment" (Süner 124, Cardullo 86, 00:19:35). After this montage, the couple kills Frank, the film's embodiment of mainstream French culture, solidifying their expression of individual identity through countercultural violence (Cardullo 86, 00:20:00-00:22:00).

While the dialectical montage in *Pierrot le Fou* reveals Ferdinand and Marianne's violent expressions of individualistic counterculture, the dialectical montage in *Easy Rider* emphasizes Wyatt and Billy's stylistic embodiment of the liberties of American counterculture. Both protagonists are countercultural representations of famous Western outlaws, specifically Wyatt Earp and Billy the Kid, which highlights their subversive nature and pursuit of a new countercultural frontier on the road (Asquith 26). While Wyatt and Billy's journey is a "journey

from oppression to freedom in a spirit symbolized by such figures as the cowboy," their road trip from the West to the East is a subversion of "Manifest Destiny," which focuses on dismantling traditional American values, like patriotism and Western expansion, for the countercultural values of collective expression and personal liberty (26).

When countercultural cowboys Wyatt and Billy arrive in New Orleans, a dialectical montage of the Mardi Gras parade highlights their doomed role as outlaws in the frontier of postmodern America and the disillusioned nature of the counterculture they represent (Asquith 26). According to Bren Ortega Murphy and Jeffery Scott Harder, "Mardi Gras is the ostensible destination. But, it is not a permanent one nor does it seem to promise any kind of spiritual awakening," as Wyatt and Billy will continue their futile journey homeward after the festivities (67). In many ways, the parade itself represents the lack of permanence in their road trip, as the vehicles and performers collectively express freedom on the road without a final destination, emphasizing the futility of Wyatt and Billy's journey from "West to East" (Murphy and Harder 67, Lawrence 665). The montage opens with a close-up of an African-American man in a ceremonial headdress, signifying a new, racially diverse American native after the Civil Rights movement (01:18:03). A jump cut reveals a young female hippie inquisitively touching the headdress, demonstrating the youth's fascination with new American values, including racial equality and freedom of expression (01:18:04). Nevertheless, these shots are juxtaposed with a series of medium to long shots of a boat of people dressed as Revolutionary War soldiers passing in front of the Roosevelt Hotel (01:18:05). These shots of soldiers and the hotel, which is named after President Franklin D. Roosevelt, creates "a mutually intelligible network of signs" signifying the American "Establishment," which looms over the protagonists throughout their journey (Cardullo 86, Gallagher and Greenblatt 7). Another jump cut juxtaposes these shots with

a downward slanted close-up of Billy and Wyatt despondently looking upward at the symbols of the "Establishment," accentuating the futility of their resistance of the social constructs they attempt to subvert (Cardullo 86, 01:18:06).

As the Mardi Gras montage progresses, the juxtaposition of shots of the "Establishment" and Wyatt and Billy solidifies the disillusionment of the countercultural cowboys' pursuit of collective freedom from mainstream culture (Eisenstein 297, Cardullo 86). A jump cut to a long shot shows a group of soldiers marching in the streets, signifying the militaristic nature of the "Establishment" against the protagonists and the counterculture they embody (01:18:10). The next two jump cuts juxtaposes a close-up of an American Flag and a medium-close shot of the American flag on Wyatt's jacket; this collision of shots emphasizes the inescapable, ever-present nature of traditional American values on the protagonists' experiences on the road (01:18:12). The final sequence of shots in the montage solidifies the nihilistic nature of Wyatt and Billy's pursuit of liberty on the road. In a medium shot that zooms to a medium-close shot, Billy looks up at an object with a fearful expression on his face (01:18:18); a point-of-view reverse shot reveals the object of Billy's gaze—an abstract, mangled version of the Statue of Liberty (01:18:19). The marred Statue of Liberty, juxtaposed with Billy's disillusioned stare, signifies the nihilism of the protagonists' pursuit of countercultural freedom.

Before Billy and Wyatt leave New Orleans for California, Wyatt despondently admits their failure of attaining freedom on the road by saying, "We blew it" (01:25:56). Joe Lawrence addresses the implications of this statement for the collective counterculture: "When Captain America says 'We blew it,' he speaks for the twentieth-century man" (Lawrence 666). While Wyatt's statement directly addresses their failure, the juxtaposed shots of Billy's hopeless

expression and the destroyed Statue of Liberty signify the nihilism of their journey and the American youth's collective pursuit of countercultural freedom (01:18:19).

The Nihilistic Demise of the Characters and Counterculture

At the end of *Easy Rider* and *Pierrot le Fou*, both sets of protagonists face a nihilistic demise that mirrors the futility of the countercultural movements in the United States and France, respectively. These final sequences not only detail the deaths of the characters, but also express the abyss-like emptiness of the counterculture. Furthermore, the agent of annihilation in both films reveals the root of the death of American and French counterculture. In *Easy Rider*, two Southern, white men shoot Billy and Wyatt off of their motorcycles, signifying the destruction of the counterculture by a conservative mainstream culture. In *Pierrot le Fou*, Ferdinand accidentally kills Marianne in the crossfire, which leads him to take his own life by exploding his head with dynamite; this final sequence demonstrates the death of countercultural individual identity through the violent expression of the individuals themselves. After the protagonists' tragic deaths, both *Easy Rider* and *Pierrot le Fou* conclude with a final shot that lingers on an empty establishing shot of the characters' final resting places, emphasizing the nihilistic fate of the counterculture through the deaths of these characters.

As Wyatt and Billy begin their journey back to California from New Orleans, two Southern male members of the "Establishment" threaten to kill the countercultural protagonists (Cardullo 86, 01:28:33). After the passenger wielding the weapon asks Billy if "[he] wants [him] to blow his brains out" in a close-up shot, a reverse shot reveals Billy raising his middle finger to the gunman, which emphasizes his aggressive resistance of American sociocultural norms (01:28:37). After asking Billy to "get a haircut," the passenger mindlessly shoots him, throwing Billy from his motorcycle onto the road (1:28:44). By rendering Billy immobile on the

countercultural road, the white member of the "Establishment" concludes one of the protagonist's journeys prematurely, signifying the demobilization of a countercultural individual by a member of the "Establishment" (Cardullo 86, 01:28:46). After Wyatt turns around in an attempt to help his fallen friend, Billy's final words are "I'm going to get him" (01:29:06). Billy's desire to fight his murderer is futile because he is dying on the side of the road, emphasizing the inability of the dying counterculture to resist the "Establishment" (Cardullo 86).

In the final shots of the film, Wyatt's death solidifies the nihilistic destruction of the collective counterculture by a member of the mainstream culture. As Wyatt rides down the road to find help for his friend, the truck driver turns around to allow his passenger to kill Wyatt as well. In a long shot that zooms to a blurry medium shot, Wyatt drives toward the camera, facing death at the hand of the gunman (01:29:36). A jump cut reveals a point-of-view shot of the gunman shooting Wyatt (01:29:39); since this shot is from Wyatt's perspective, the viewer becomes a voyeuristic victim of the bullet, highlighting the widespread nature of the demise of the collective counterculture.[8] After a brief flash of red across the screen, a jump cut to a long shot shows Wyatt's American flag bike fall apart, signifying the dismantling of the countercultural American dream and object of agency on the revisionist road trip (1:29:40). In a series of three discontinuous jump cuts of close-up shots of the bike exploding, the destruction of Wyatt's motorcycle accentuates the final annihilation of the American collective counterculture

[8] In 1967, Arthur Penn's countercultural masterpiece *Bonnie and Clyde* featured a similar ending where a group of police officers shoot Bonnie and Clyde multiple times. Using frenetic montage with several point-of-view shots, the film places the audience alongside Bonnie and Clyde as they die for their countercultural crimes.

(01:29:45). In a final God's-eye-view shot punctuated by Wyatt's burning motorcycle, the deep-focus cinematography showcases the emptiness of the American dream on the road and the nihilism of the collective counterculture it represents (01:29:47).

While the deaths of Billy and Wyatt encapsulated the destruction of the collective American counterculture, the deaths of Marianne and Ferdinand emphasize the self-destruction of the individualistic counterculture in France. As Ferdinand attempts to shoot a government agent who has captured Marianne around an island in the Riviera, a medium shot shows Marianne falling into Ferdinand's arms after Ferdinand accidentally shoots her stomach in the crossfire, which demonstrates the self-inflicted demise of the counterculture (01:44:23). A jump cut reveals a long shot, framed within the window of an abandoned home, of Ferdinand carrying Marianne to safety in an attempt to save her life (01:44:42); the framing of this shot indicates Ferdinand and Marianne's isolation from constructs of "everyday" society, including the home and family, which they replaced with a countercultural life on the road (Süner 123). After Ferdinand breaks into the home, he places Marianne on a blue bed similar to the bed that held the dead body in the safe house from earlier in the film (01:45:30). The repetition of the blue bed in both safe houses signifies the futile, cyclical nature of their journey, as the individuals destroy themselves in the manner they attempted to destroy the "Establishment" (Cardullo 86).

After Marianne's death on the blue bed in the second safe house, Ferdinand decides to kill himself with dynamite, causing an explosive annihilation similar to the nihilistic destruction of Wyatt's motorcycle at the end of *Easy Rider*. Before he commits suicide, a close-up shot shows Ferdinand painting his face blue (01:46:43); the combination of his white shirt, red tie, and blue face paint represent the French flag, which signifies an acceptance of his identity as a French individual. Furthermore, a close-up reveals Ferdinand writing the word *mort*, meaning

death, within the word *art*, emphasizing the nihilistic act of painting his face while recalling the montage that compared Ferdinand's individuality with an Impressionist painting (01:47:11). After a close-up of Ferdinand asking "What's the point?" while looking at the camera, a jump cut reveals the protagonist, who has isolated himself at the end of the road (both literally and metaphorically), wrapping the dynamite around his head (01:47:42-01:48:00). Another jump cut shows a close-up of Ferdinand lighting the dynamite on fire as he exclaims, "What an idiot! Shit! A glorious death . . . " (01:48:58). As an extreme-long shot reveals Pierrot exploding at the end of the road, the juxtaposition of these shots foreshadows the nihilistic demise of France's counterculture through the self-inflicted violent expressions of French individuals (01:49:07). As the shot progresses, the camera pans out to the empty sea beyond the road, illustrating the empty pursuit of "the true life" and meaninglessness of the individualistic counterculture (Süner 124).[9]

Conclusion

Throughout *Pierrot le Fou* and *Easy Rider*, the central protagonists' road trips express the disillusionment of countercultural identity in France and the United States during the 1960s. In *Pierrot le Fou*, the road serves as a means of escape that allows Ferdinand and Marianne to abandon sociocultural constructs, including the home and family, in order to pursue "the true

[9] The final shot of the empty seascape in *Pierrot le Fou* closely resembles the ending of François Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* (1959), a foundational film of the French New Wave. In Truffaut's film, the protagonist, Antoine Doinel, runs away from a juvenile correction facility to the sea in search of freedom. When Antoine finally arrives on the shore, his emotions slowly change from excitement to fear and disappointment, as he faces the uncertainty of his future and the future of his generation.

life" (Süner 123-24). In *Easy Rider*, the road represents the death of American patriotism by the collective counterculture during the Vietnam era. By combining Eisensteinian dialectical montage with discontinuity editing, both films fragment and dismantle the otherwise linear road motif to emphasize the nihilism of the endeavors of the protagonists and the counterculture they embody. Furthermore, dialectical montage "select[s] units of social action" to articulate historical and sociocultural evidence in an "intense, nuanced, and sustained" manner throughout the films (Gallagher and Greenblatt 26). The disillusioned conclusions of *Pierrot le Fou* and *Easy Rider* demonstrate the annihilation of the countercultural "dream of the masses" (Bazin 40).

After *Pierrot le Fou*, Godard continued to explore counterculture and anti-consumerism by spreading Communist ideologies through films such as *La Chinoise* (1967) and *Weekend* (1967); Godard's promotion of Communism helped publicize the growing acceptance of Marxist ideas across France and proliferate countercultural ideals throughout the late 1960s. Unfortunately, his revolutionary political perspectives ended the French New Wave, premeditating the nihilistic conclusion of France's counterculture after the Marxist student riots at the Sorbonne in 1968 (Kaufmann 28). Similarly, Dennis Hopper followed *Easy Rider* with the nihilistic anti-Western *The Last Movie*, which derailed Hopper's directorial career for nearly a decade because of its controversial depictions of sex and violence. While Hopper's *The Last Movie* did not trigger a premature conclusion to the New Hollywood movement, his film did signal an ideological shift in American films as the Vietnam War came to a close. As soldiers returned home to obscene mistreatment and the Watergate scandal challenged the validity of democracy, America's sociopolitical climate disintegrated the idealistic countercultural "dream of the masses" throughout the 1970s (Bazin 40). Films such as *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975), *All the President's Men* (1976), and *Coming Home* (1978) demonstrated the need for social order

and an honest political system to create a well-structured society, emphasizing the nihilism of America’s rebellious collective counterculture. While both *Pierrot le Fou* and *Easy Rider* helped cultivate counterculture, the student protests in Paris in 1968 and the end of the Vietnam War in the early 1970s demonstrated the nihilistic disillusionment expressed in both films, warning future generations to tread carefully into countercultural movements.

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Essay

Benjamin Crabtree

From "Plastics" in Pasadena to Sex in Sacramento:

Gender and Sexuality in *The Graduate* and *Lady Bird*

In Mike Nichols's *The Graduate* and Greta Gerwig's *Lady Bird*, both protagonists' coming-of-age stories offer a unique perspective of gender performance. In *The Graduate*, Benjamin Braddock's entrapment within 1960s suburbia fuels his struggle to perform masculinity properly, as he attempts to foster individual identity in post-graduate life. In *Lady Bird*, the titular character navigates the difficulties of her upbringing and her budding sexuality in order to understand her feminine individuality. Both *The Graduate* and *Lady Bird* depict the complexity of gender performance outlined in Judith Butler's "Imitation and Gender Subordination," as they navigate their own understanding of their identity by wrestling with their personal perspectives of gender and the social constructs of stereotypical masculinity and femininity. While Benjamin Braddock attempts futilely to overcome his masculine anxieties through sexual activity with Mrs. Robinson, Lady Bird McPherson's rejection of socially constructed femininity and her sexual partner empowers her to create her own female identity.

The opening sequence of *The Graduate* establishes Benjamin's lack of personal agency as well as the baggage of performing a socially mandated version of masculinity. As the opening credits pass across the screen to "The Sound of Silence," Benjamin is framed in a medium shot, as he stands on a moving sidewalk in an airport (00:00:55). Immediately, he is shown as a lonely, isolated individual who does not have the agency to move himself forward; the tracking shot throughout the credit sequence emphasizes this isolation and lack of personal power, as

Benjamin is unable to move forward on his own (00:01:00). According to Judith Butler, gender performance is a form of "drag" that "constitutes the mundane way in which genders are appropriated, theatricalized, worn, and done" (Butler 955). In the 1960s, male dominance and aggressive assertions of independence characterized masculinity. Therefore, if Benjamin were to "enact the very structure by which [his] *gender* is assumed" (Butler 955), he would walk confidently through the airport on his own terms. However, since Benjamin allows himself to drift in isolation through the airport without personal intervention, he does not perform the drag of 1960s masculinity; instead, he wallows in the isolation of his masculine anxieties. A match cut reveals his luggage gliding across the baggage claim in a manner similar to his transportation along the moving sidewalk, highlighting the symbolic baggage of his inability to understand and perform "proper" masculinity (00:02:22). The Simon and Garfunkel song further punctuates his anxious entrapment; his "talking without speaking" expresses Benjamin's insecurity in his masculine identity (00:02:16).

While the opening of *The Graduate* showcases Benjamin's anxious masculinity, the opening of *Lady Bird* establishes the protagonist's confident individuality and female identity through her defiance of typical femininity. The film's opening shot shows Lady Bird and her mother mirrored in the frame, which introduces a thematic doubling that pervades the film; however, Lady Bird's arm acts as a barrier between them, emphasizing the protagonist's differentiation from her mother's generation's perspective of femininity (00:00:25). After Lady Bird and her mother argue in the car, a medium-close shot shows the protagonist throw herself from their car, which is a more obvious act of differentiation from her mother (00:03:18). A jump cut to a close-up of Lady Bird's cast with "Fuck you, Mom" inscribed upon it further reveals Lady Bird's desire to differentiate herself from her mother's femininity (00:03:22).

Rather than merely performing one act of differentiation, Lady Bird asserts her feminine independence repeatedly. Judith Butler discusses how this type of repetition solidifies an individual's performance of their gender: "That there is a need for a repetition at all is a sign that identity is not self-identical. It requires to be instituted again and again, which is to say that it runs the risk of becoming de-instituted at every interval" (Butler 958). While Lady Bird's acts of defiance help foster her individual identity, they also reveal the anxiety that her feminine individuality may become "de-instituted." Professor Molly McGrath reflects on Lady Bird's struggle between differentiation and de-institution: "When she runs for class president, Lady Bird's campaign posters suggest that she can't quite decide whether she's a bird with a human head or a human with a bird head. Either way, she doesn't want to be what God or her parents made her" (85). Even as Lady Bird navigates the anxieties of uncovering her female identity through gender performance, she still possesses a basic understanding of her desire to create her own female identity.

Although Lady Bird has a basic understanding of feminine independence throughout the film, Benjamin Braddock wrestles with his performative masculinity as Mrs. Robinson attempts to seduce him. As he comes to the realization that Mrs. Robinson is seducing him, a medium shot frames Benjamin within the curve of Mrs. Robinson's leg (00:12:50); in this shot, Mrs. Robinson's leg dwarfs Benjamin, highlighting his anxious entrapment within her feminine power. When Benjamin helps Mrs. Robinson remove her dress, her animal print lingerie signifies her status as a powerful predator, while he is a prey entrapped within a failed performance of masculinity (00:14:36). A reverse shot reveals Mrs. Robinson's perspective of Benjamin standing in the doorway, framed in the prison bar-like shadows from the stair banisters in the foyer (00:14:45); Benjamin is imprisoned within his anxious masculinity, which is a mere

shadow of 1960s performative masculinity. As the scene continues, a montage illustrates Benjamin's internal conflict between wallowing in his anxious perspective of sexuality or enacting the sex-centered drag of 1960s masculinity. By juxtaposing close-up shots of his point-of-view of Mrs. Robinson's body and close-up reverse shots of his squeamish reaction to her nudity, Benjamin begins to perform masculine drag reluctantly, as he objectifies Mrs. Robinson by studying her female form (00:16:28). Although his fulfillment of performative masculinity should solidify him in a position of masculine agency, his hesitancy and initial rejection of her proposal render him powerless. Even when Benjamin gives into their adulterous partnership, Mrs. Robinson remains in power, emphasizing Benjamin's insufficient performance of masculinity.

In *Lady Bird*, the titular character finds feminine independence by rejecting Kyle, her sexual partner; this assertion of individual agency allows her to break from performing problematic, socially constructed femininity, which objectifies women as men's sexual objects, in order to create her own "performative" femininity. When Kyle and Lady Bird decide to "deflower each other," the camera frames Lady Bird on top of Kyle in a medium-close shot (00:58:20). Although it seems that Lady Bird is the individual in power in the scenario initially, Kyle subverts our expectation when he reveals that he is not a virgin. When Kyle shares this confession, he is framed as the dominant figure in the medium-close shot, signifying a reversal of power in the scenario (00:59:58). As Lady Bird analyzes the situation, she states, "I just had a whole experience that was wrong" (01:00:26); this realization triggers Lady Bird to isolate herself in a medium shot on the other side of the bed, which signifies her rejection of Kyle as a sexual partner and her dismissal of the socially constructed drag of submissive femininity (01:00:30). In an attempt to console Lady Bird, Kyle changes the subject to discuss the tragedies

of the Iraq War, revealing his performance of toxic, socially constructed masculine drag. Rather than blindly accepting Kyle's discussion of violence, Lady Bird maintains her independent performative femininity, as she tells him to "shut up" in a close-up shot (01:01:15). In the final scene featuring Lady Bird and Kyle together, Lady Bird declares her love for the Dave Matthew's Band song "Crash into Me" after Kyle announces that he dislikes the song. A slightly low-angled, close-up shot isolates Lady Bird as a strong, independent figure in the frame, which expresses the solidification of her feminine identity (01:10:00). After affirming her independence, Lady Bird emphasizes her personalized female agency by going to prom with her best friend. By rejecting Kyle for her best friend, Lady Bird and Julie create their own "performative" by enacting the feminist "effect [that they] appear to express" (Butler 957).

While Lady Bird's rejection of a sexual partner allows her to create a unique feminine identity, Benjamin Braddock's eventual immersion into sexual activity with Mrs. Robinson continues to weaken his masculine identity by robbing him of personal agency. In a montage to "The Sound of Silence" and "April Come She Will" by Simon and Garfunkel, the film expresses Benjamin's lazy acceptance of his masculine anxieties by cross-cutting between Benjamin's leisurely time in his suburban pool and his mechanical sexual affair with Mrs. Robinson. According to professor Robert Beuka, Benjamin Braddock's lack of agency undermines his attempts to transcend the socially constructed masculinity of the 1960s: "Ben's search, at the dawn of his 'manhood' for an identity apart from what he sees as the constricting, spirit-crushing world of his parents' generation, an unreflective, blandly material existence best symbolized by their ersatz suburban landscape" (14). The montage opens with a double-exposure close-up of Benjamin drifting in the pool (00:38:27); this shot expresses Benjamin's rejection of personal control as he drifts carelessly in "the constricting, spirit-crushing world of his parents'

generation" (Beuka 14). Throughout the film, the pool symbolizes "the superficial, self-destructive narcissism of [Benjamin's] dream," which fuels his masculine anxieties and personal crises (Beuka 14). A cross-fade reveals a medium shot of Benjamin holding a can of beer between his legs in the pool (00:38:50). Although the can of beer acts as an obvious phallic symbol, the disposability of the beer expresses the anxiety and possible expendability of Benjamin's masculinity.

As the montage transitions from "The Sound of Silence" to "April Come She Will," the second song's lyrics about changing seasons underscore Benjamin Braddock's unchanging actions ironically, highlighting his disillusioned performative masculinity. A close-up shows Benjamin staring blankly at a television, as he is shrouded in the darkness of the hotel room (00:41:00). As the camera zooms out, a long-shot reveals Benjamin laying lifelessly in bed and holding a beer can between his legs, similar to the earlier shot in the pool, highlighting the persistence of his performative anxieties (00:41:05). As the camera pans to follow Mrs. Robinson leaving the hotel room, a medium shot frames Benjamin's reflection in the mirror, which expresses that Benjamin is only a reflection of a man (00:41:48). Even as he tries to perform the socially constructed drag of sexual masculinity, he will never be able to transcend "the superficial, self-destructive narcissism of [his] dream" to create his own masculine identity (Beuka 14).

The ambiguous final scene of *The Graduate* solidifies Benjamin's persistent anxieties of gender performativity. In *The Graduate*, Benjamin Braddock crashes Elaine Robinson's wedding, and the two of them run away together. In the final shots of the film, a medium-close shot frames the couple in the back of a public bus (01:44:37). While Elaine embodies socially constructed performative femininity by wearing her white wedding dress, Benjamin wears casual

clothing, which expresses his failure to fulfill his gender drag. As the scene continues, "The Sound of Silence" begins to play again, expressing the absurdity of Benjamin's masculine anxieties. Benjamin is unable to fulfill his performance of masculinity, and ends the film in the place of isolation and anxiety in which he started. The final long shot of the film reveals Benjamin and Elaine isolated in two separate windows of the bus as it drives away, reinforcing Benjamin's entrapment within his gender anxieties and "superficial, self-destructive narcissism" (Beuka 14, 01:45:25).

While Benjamin Braddock fails to transcend his masculine anxiety in *The Graduate*, Lady Bird solidifies her female individuality by synthesizing her religious and familial roots with her newfound independence as she confronts her ambiguous future. After attending a church service in New York City, Lady Bird calls her mom to express her gratitude for her positive upbringing. Through a montage that depicts her reflections on home, the audience witnesses Lady Bird's individual perspective of her life. A close-up shot shows Lady Bird driving through her home town for the first time (01:27:35); a jump cut reveals a medium-long shot of Lady Bird's point-of-view of the streets of Sacramento, highlighting the personal perspective of the world that she developed throughout the film (01:27:40). A series of match cuts between Lady Bird and her mother emphasizes the protagonist's positive performative femininity (01:27:55). Although the match cuts between the two women link them thematically within the film, both Lady Bird and her mother represent individualized versions of female drag. Rather than being molded by society or by each other, both women allow their experiences and individual personalities to characterize their performances of femininity. Molly McGrath suggests that this montage expresses the protagonist's realization of her identity and gratitude for her upbringing because of her removal from her hometown and family:

> It shows appreciation toward Lady Bird's hometown, in its mundane charm, and toward those people who—even unintentionally—were instrumental in her growth. Beyond gratitude for benevolence, the film suggests, we can be thankful for others' errors or mistreatment, provided that we can turn such things toward the good. But only after she goes east and gains her independence can Lady Bird appreciate her dependence, the gifts given. (86)

Even in the final shot of Lady Bird looking around her inquisitively, the mise-en-scène of the Catholic Church links Lady Bird to her roots in the midst of her new life (01:28:25). Although Lady Bird must address the ambiguity of her new life in the East, her feminine independence will serve as a foundation for her performative actions.

Through their complex depictions of gender, *The Graduate* and *Lady Bird* offer negative and positive perspectives of gender performance, respectively. In *The Graduate*, Benjamin Braddock tries to overcome his gender anxieties through a lazy performance of socially constructed, sexualized masculinity; unfortunately, his inability to formulate an independent masculine identity leads him to remain entrapped within his disillusioned masculine drag. In *Lady Bird*, the titular character creates an independent feminine identity by synthesizing her personal experiences with her rejection of socially constructed femininity. While Benjamin falls victim to the negative 1960s perspective of masculinity, Lady Bird transcends stereotypical femininity to create a personalized gender drag to perform, which heightens the film's prescience in the midst of the "Time's Up" movement.

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Essay

Ryan Lally

"Is a speech of despair just wind?"[1]

Consolatory Poetics and Cinema in *Job* and *A Serious Man*

The Book of Job's seemingly eternal prominence in Western literature emanates from its rigorous questioning of the cosmic order and divine justice. Instead of providing clear and definitive answers to Job's investigation of the reasons for his suffering, the text offers consolation in the form of emotionally comforting verse. Job's poetry does not merely dwell on his own personal circumstances; it broadens the scope of suffering so that readers may dwell upon their own experiences of misery and find relief through the language that so aptly captures their inexpressible internal feelings. *The Book of Job* demonstrates poetry's power to capture human emotion and reproduce it in a consoling form. In adapting the text for their film *A Serious Man*, the Coen brothers maintain that art can provide consolation. *The Book of Job*'s use of the objective correlative allows readers to process their own emotions as they read about Job's misery, which leads to a feeling of consolation. Similarly, *A Serious Man* utilizes the relationship between viewer and image in order to encourage viewers to laugh at their own uncertainty, which is also a consolatory act, while watching the protagonist, Larry, fail to resolve his own questions about the universe.

The Book of Job explicitly announces that its purpose is consolation. Responding to the second monologue of Zophar, Job begins, "Listen carefully to what I have to say, / and let that be your act of consolation" (101). These lines induce readers to think about the nature of this text

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[1] From *The Book of Job*, translated by Raymond Scheindlin, p67.

and whether it actually offers itself as a means of consolation. The beginning of this speech by Job establishes the parameters with which his words should be interpreted. If readers can be attentive to the emotional complexity of Job's speech and be aware of poetry's potential for ambiguity, they may find relief in this philosophical interrogation of a seemingly amoral universe. Job's acidic reply to his friend's allegations of sinfulness may be interpreted as mere bitterness and sarcasm, but such a limited reading of this poetry would deny the possibility for ambiguity that is present throughout *The Book of Job*.

A prime example of textual ambiguity can be found in God's adulatory speech for the River Beast. The title "River Beast" is a translation that Rabbi Raymond Scheindlin chose for what is typically called "Leviathan" in English translations. God's description of the River Beast encourages a conflicting mixture of emotions that indicates how Job's bitter and negative language can also be a positive method of consolation. God remarks, "Might resides in his neck; / misery dances before him" (153). The first line of this couplet directs awe and wonder towards this mystic creature. God's use of "resides," instead of using a more typical construction like 'his neck is mighty,' emphasizes that might is not an external modifier for the River Beast. Might is integral to its being; since it is located within the beast's neck, the beast itself is the manifestation of power. By speaking of the River Beast in this manner, God constructs it as a figure of wonder. The next line complicates this perception of the River Beast: "misery dances before him" (153). God illustrates that this figure does not just convey awe. It also evokes terror. Just like in the previous line, the verb makes an emotional quality a tangible, active presence. God says that this palpable misery "dances," thereby juxtaposing two words with opposing connotations. The parallelism of these lines associates dancing with laughing and places these actions in opposition to weeping and mourning. God implicitly suggests that this personified misery acts with joy

upon seeing the powerful River Beast. Might can provoke terror, awe, and even excitement. This unlikely admixture of emotions highlights that *The Book of Job* is rife with ambiguity.

Just as the River Beast can cause several emotional reactions, Job's reply to his friend Zophar is both a moment of sarcasm and a genuine entreaty. He believes that sharing his feelings can provide consolation for himself and his friends who fail to grasp why Job is suffering. Therefore, Job's poetic speech postulates an ethic of poetry. It shows that poetry is a method of creative consolation. Poetic language allows speakers to process their thoughts and feelings. As Zophar says to Job before his aforementioned comment: "This is why my unsettling thoughts compel me to answer / because I am upset! (*The Book of Job* 98). For both Zophar and Job, speaking their thoughts, bringing their grief into a shared space, allows them reach for consolation. For the readers in this text, they can share in this experience and actively engage in another's grief. They can "listen carefully" and find ways to come to terms with their own grief (101). The emotional and intellectual interaction between reader and text, whereby the reader enters into the mire of complexity and ambiguity that comprises human experience, allows readers to find comfort and delight in their world despite the challenges and trials of life.

This experiential ethic of poetry is not unique to *The Book of Job*—poetry has a far-reaching ability to console. Scholar Ellen Davis recognizes that the cathartic practice of reading is integral to the study of other books of Biblical poetry, especially Psalms. Writing about the cursing psalms, Davis notes that the poems ". . . *give us words for our anger* when we are too stunned by its enormity to find our own" (Davis 26). A powerful emotion is not easily expressible because they are convoluted and oftentimes contradictory. Emotions of this intensity frequently result in physical gestures because a proper verbal expression is not easily accessible. The opening narrative frame of *The Book of Job* ends with Job's friends conveying their dismay

through physical actions: “They raised their voices and wept, and each tore his robe, and all put dirt on their heads, throwing it heavenward” (58). It is tempting to rely on gesturing, thereby letting emotion control action. Yet, Davis argues that “Healing for ourselves and even for our enemies requires that we acknowledge our bitter feelings and yet not yield to their tyranny” (Davis 25-26). Just so, Job and his friend do not store their grief in silence and continue to yield to the destructive impulses of misery. They bring their grief into communal spaces through language in order to process their emotions and console themselves despite their ignorance of God’s purposes and the lack of resolution in the text.

Biblical poetry allows readers to confront emotion through language and find consolation. Davis notes that when readers pray the psalms, they channel their emotions into the psalmists' lamentations, curses, and praises (25-28). In doing so, readers can transition from their feelings to the contemplation of God, which constitutes an act of consolation. Translator Raymond Scheindlin observes in his introduction to *The Book of Job* that the text is equally capable of converting raw, inexpressible emotion into a more manageable, verbal form: “Job’s anger helps tame ours and bring it into manageable compass; this itself is a kind of consolation” (26). Poetry provides access to emotional clarity. By articulating emotion, poetry can tame it. Readers can come to terms with the difficulties in their own lives by reading about others’ trials.

The poetry of Job further helps readers process emotion by using accessible images developed through parallelism. These images are accessible because they engage in the poetic strategy of the objective correlative. T.S. Eliot defines this technique as “. . . a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked” (100). An excerpt from Job’s first reply to Eliphaz is a suitable example of

his ability to communicate internal emotions through sensory experiences. Job laments, “As for my friends— / they failed me like a riverbed, wandered off, like water in a wadi” (*The Book of Job* 66). Job communicates his sense of betrayal and isolation through a sequence of similes based upon sensory experience. The use of simile indicates that Job wants to share his emotion because he broadens the particularities of his experience through comparison. A reader has likely not experienced the tragedies of Job, so Job associates his situation with a more relatable external experience—seeing a dry riverbed—in order to convey his emotion.

Job provides broad access to his emotions, which supports Scheindlin’s assertion that Job is an Everyman figure. A mysterious Accuser may not be orchestrating readers’ miseries, but many can relate to the situation of having something like a riverbed—a trusted source of nourishment, transportation, and possible recreation—suddenly become no longer available due to activities outside their control (Scheindlin 11). By comparing an internal situation of anguish to external images, the poetry of Job dislocates the emotional focus of the poem from a single person to a larger community of readers. His words become a conduit of everyone’s potential misery and sense of abandonment.

Job progresses to correlate emotions to images, building upon his initial comparison by providing more varied descriptions. Job continues, “Gloomy on an icy day, / covered up with snow; / they flow one moment, then are gone” (66). At first, Job takes his personal misery and applies it to a particular situation. He then takes that situation and adapts it to include more possibilities. His turmoil is both a dry riverbed and a frozen one, which communicates that his misery derives from abandonment and a lack of access. A frozen river remains present to a viewer, but is unavailable. Just so, his friends are in front of him, but cannot provide the relief and support that he craves. By providing these two potential ways of interpreting his inner state,

Job expands the possibilities for readers to engage with their emotions through the text. His pain is not limited to a single situation. Each elaboration of his emotion through a subsequent image broadens readers' access to his emotional state so that it additionally encompasses their own. What would otherwise terminate in the internal world of personal grief is opened to the external. Through the linguistic act of poetry, these internal feelings can not only be shared with others, but also processed and resolved.

Cinema shares poetry's demonstrated capacity to channel emotion into language and consequently tame it. The limitations of a non-visual medium like poetry require readers to complete the association between a linguistic signifier and its signified object. In the context of the aforementioned excerpt from *The Book of Job*, the reader must supply the image of an icy day. The words themselves do not conjure a mental image if the mental image cannot already be generated by readers' experiences or powers of extrapolation. Poetry, therefore, can guide emotions into a context that allows readers to process their feelings through the speaker's language in order to find consolation. The interaction between viewers and film allows for a similar level of emotional taming because the added dimension of visual media simply acts as another set of signifiers that viewers must interpret in order to process their internal life.

Jacques Lacan's theory of the mirror stage helps inform how people interpret and relate to images, and this psychological stage additionally demonstrates how an audience watches a film. Lacan argues that ". . . the function of the mirror-stage [is] a particular case of the function *imago*, which is to establish a relation between the organism and its reality" (4). What Eliot's objective correlative does for poetry, Lacan's theory concerning the mirror stage of psychological development does for cinema. When children see their images in a mirror during this stage of psychological development, they begin to comprehend a sense of self, even if it

"appears to [them] above all in a contrasting size . . . and in a symmetry that inverts it" (Lacan 2). The mirror stage indicates that humans construct their self-awareness through external stimuli. Even after growing past this infantile state, people continue to learn about themselves through images, like film.

While Lacan notes that the division between the external image and the internal reality causes a deeply rooted feeling of alienation, viewers still develop their consciousness and internal awareness through the practice of watching. In this way, cinema is like an imperfect mirror. It cannot create a reality and it does not show a true image of a viewer, but it can be a medium through which viewers can better understand themselves because of its limited mimicry. The immersive quality of film at first displaces viewers from their own situations, but by processing the particularities of a character's circumstances, viewers can begin to learn something more generally about their own internal life. The poetry of Job moves from the particularities of his own misery to metaphoric comparisons that invite other people to understand suffering. The film adaptation *A Serious Man* similarly presents a particular set of sense experiences through aural and visual stimuli that allow viewers to process their own emotions and experiences, and in effect, tame them.

A pertinent example of cinema's capacity to take control and process human emotion can be found in Larry's appointment with the Junior Rabbi Scott. The scene opens with a close-up shot of Larry from the shoulders up (0:43:52). He looks mostly put together as far as his apparel and hair are concerned, but the pronounced puffiness beneath his eyes, likely due to fatigue, signify that he is struggling with the unexpected difficulties of his life. As Rabbi Scott enters the lobby where Larry waits, the image changes to a medium shot with both characters in the frame (0:43:55). Though Rabbi Scott and Larry are looking at each other, their bodies are postured

towards the camera. Their positioning foreshadows their inability to communicate competently with each other because interest in a conversation is best displayed when speakers mirror each other's postures and angle their entire bodies towards the recipients of their speech. The characters' asymmetry also emphasizes the distance between the viewer and the image of the film. This shot, by separating viewers from the conversation, focuses attention on the particularities of Larry's situation. In terms of the mirror stage, the audience views the image as a distinct and separate entity from themselves. As this scene continues, however, the composition and angles of shots invite viewers to more closely share the perspective of Larry.

The bond between viewer and character as orchestrated through the camera comes to fruition when Rabbi Scott walks to the window in order to peer out at the parking lot. Viewers are first invited to laugh at Larry and his experience with this absurd young man who fails to measure up to the status of teacher, both intellectually and physically. But, just as Job's series of parallel images allows for readers to insert their own emotional experiences into the text, the sequence of shots brings the viewers into Larry's misery so that his circumstances can more generally be applied to theirs. The camera assumes the perspective of Rabbi Scott, and the viewers are left to see through the eyes of a character. This perfectly mundane suburban landscape that viewers are locked into and Larry is encouraged to enjoy becomes the ultimate image of unity between the viewers' emotions and those of the characters. The viewers laugh at their own uncertainty when they laugh at Larry's failed attempts to understand why his life is falling apart, which provides a significant measure of consolation for viewers who face their own lives with uncertainty.

The first office scene between Larry and his student Clive also creates a sympathetic viewing experience that allows viewers to laugh at their own circumstances. Just as in the office

scene with the Junior Rabbi, the shot-reverse-shot sequence of images induces viewers to identify with Larry and his plight of explaining a failing grade to a clueless student. The camera is positioned off-center from Clive, so that he is located slightly to the right in the foreground of the shot (0:15:00). His posture is stiff, as is his delivery of broken English. He additionally clutches his textbooks on his lap, which gives him the overall appearance of an absurdly formal and strange character. Larry, on the other hand, sits relaxed with his hands crossed, dominating the frame. He is positioned directly in the middle of the shot, and only his head tilts away from the camera (0:15:32). In this way, Larry's image is a more perfect mirror of the viewer and becomes a sympathetic character. If viewers were to sit at a desk and look into a mirror, their posture and expression would fairly match with Larry's. Since Lacan demonstrates that consciousness arises from an act of viewing that leads to self-identification, Larry's framing as an average and relatable figure guides viewers to see their experiences in his.

After identifying with Larry through visual techniques, viewers can laugh at their own experiences as they laugh at Larry's futile attempt to explain physics to his student. Relatively few viewers would have the exact experience of being physics professors explaining why their students are failing, but everyone can sympathize with Larry's plight. Explaining a simple concept to someone who should know better is an experience any teacher, parent, friend, or customer service worker can understand. At this moment in the film, viewers can laugh at times in their own lives when people around them cannot understand with simplicity. In sympathizing with Larry in this way, viewers can be prepared for when Larry's falls apart and he becomes the metaphorical office guest who cannot understand what he must. Just as viewers feel consolation through laughter when they have to deal with clueless people, they can also laugh when they are the clueless ones.

Scheindlin refers to Job as an Everyman because of his authentic reactions to suffering (11). The Coen brothers, by utilizing the viewers' sympathetic reaction to images, likewise render their Job figure an Everyman. In the aforementioned scene, Larry attempts to explain why Clive needs to know the math and not just the story about Schrodinger's Cat by calling the latter "Fables, say, to help give you a picture" (00:15:36-40). This statement could apply not only to Larry's college class but also to how viewers approach *A Serious Man*. The film tells a fictional story that includes a fable prologue, which attempts to capture the humor in uncertainty. The story of Larry is likewise an adaptation of *The Book of Job*, which is also derived from fable precursor texts. All of these fables console readers and viewers when they are faced with uncertainty. They all provide pictures of our own grief and fear, so that we may process those feelings. Larry' particular story, which viewers sympathize with through visual techniques that are dependent upon the sympathetic act of viewing, is a vehicle for humor. This humor tames the viewers' own emotions that derive from cosmic uncertainty. Laughing is a method of processing emotion. It is just as much an act of consolation as Job's image-laden verse.

The poetry of *The Book of Job* achieves its consolatory effects by presenting the external world as an emotional reflection of the internal world, using language as the conduit through which the unspeakable emotions of readers can be processed and resolved. *A Serious Man* likewise encourages viewers to look past the particularities of the Job-like Larry's personal situation in order to understand and laugh at their own. Even though these two texts are placed in two widely divergent narrative contexts and communicate through two different art forms, they both uphold art's ability to console those who turn to creative productions to understand the difficulties and uncertainties of life. Definitive answers will surely prove elusive, but that does not prevent these texts from comforting those who suffer as their characters do.

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Poetry

Peter Aagaard

Elegy for Modernism

Modernism is dead,
And we have killed it.
Art's overflowing head,
Has overfilled it
And buried it, shallow now,
Piled with romance and real
As we argue, and wonder how
The next body of work we'll conceal.
We would, with stony head
Surpass the past, and like fools of old,
Reinvent the wheel, paint it red
And in progress, spin new gold.
Modernism, beaten by a post-
Modernism, the newest haunting ghost.

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Poetry

Jillian A. Fantin

"Above the sounding waves, my future flew."[1]

Ivory tower queen, you now sleep soundly next to me.
Your breath softly grazes the curve of your bottom lip
just as an ocean fog, suspended over wooden ship decks,
masks a sailor's voyaging fears and adventuring desires.
Your feet may glide over the deep's briny meniscus and leave no ripples behind,
but your clove-laced kisses painfully linger, branding my flesh as your own. Though
I do not know how many bear your marks, I only care that I joined the ranks
of the sailors who begged to breach your shores.

A century ago, the same decision made in our dingy dormitory
caused a golden girl to flee and a billionaire to fall.
One hundred years passed, and a lusty rage breaks another strand of saltwater pearls, still
dripping lifelessly, strandless, on hardwood floors. Drip.
Once, I was the narrator of the mistakes of great men, lighthouse beam
piercing the ocean fog with bright white lights to combat the discontented adventurer.
Something about the warm months now causes this Carraway
to scatter her wanton seeds to the water after two long seasons of growth.
Beating ceaselessly into mistakes of the past, my dinghy docked
amongst thousands of vessels and her island welcomed me alone.

An air conditioner pierces a neon "on" light into
our foggy room,
causing a green glow to refract off your sweat-sheened silhouette.
I reach out to grasp for more of you. But
like a sacred relic glowing in stained-glass sunlight, you, my orgastic future,
simply sleep beside me. I venerate you with a heaving chest and wet, grief-stricken hiccups.
But when I try whittling kisses into your shoulder blades to mark you,
my own muscle sinews tear against the fog's current.
With each fruitless attempt to capture you, climbing
stares continue mounting against our union.

Your drool drips on the pillow. You snore louder.

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[1] This title is adapted from a line in John Dryden's translation of *The Aeneid*.

Poetry

Lauren Morris

Religion and Recess

I chased Kyle on the playground
because if excommunication did not bring
my first-grade self to her knees,
perhaps an interdict could.

My crush could scarcely ignore my cries.
"Kiss me, Kyle, kiss me!"
My hand outstretched, lips budding, his eyes paralyzed
by cooties, he spooked, running faster.

Such peasantry disturbances to public peace
were sent to the Grand Inquisitor, Mrs. Brooks,
tortured to confession, and then denied in
high-pitched, squeaky voices.

But today, I did not worry about capital
punishment, because Adam ran too...
towards me instead of Kyle's away,
creeping closer, until finally
Adam cornered me into the playground slide:
a court room more devastating than the Inquisition.

Adam picked green goo from his nose,
puckered his lips, and then I became Kyle.
The slide's secrecy muffled my cries
while Adam forced his lips to mine,
lapsing again into heresy, making
me his medieval prisoner.

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Poetry

Emily Thorington

Connectivity

Inside tin-man car-front faces
beating hearts commute
dawn to dusk, sharing moments
of life bound in the secrecy
of glass windows. While travels
accelerate, clicks of changing
gears, and snaps
of radio channels flood listening
ears as colored lights, horns,
hand-signs tell us when to go,
rolled up windows and a/c
turned low accompany us
where we go.

Distractions in the daylight
continue in the night;
communing with constant
communications offsite.
With insight and hindsight,
we’re forthright and in-flight,
constantly craving human
conversation; with eyesight
enraptured by touch phone
screens, machines, products
of fantastical dreams, our heads bent
toward the dirt, we walk on paths,
give attention to silver and glass,
passing beauty and information
of infinite worth.

All that we see
and don't see, stuck in cycles
of self-pity, seeing images
and images—

When music stations cease to bring
new songs every hour, sliding fingers
dart back and forth find no new news
to devour. When no messages arrive
in e-box, silence in the room
pervades and restlessness in-drops,
when fears and thoughts begin to
twirl and cartwheel in the mind,
begin jittery hands, bending
toes, and crunching Cheetos
in quiet times.

When cars are parked, when the tv's off,
when music stops, when lights click
off, when a/c keeps a steady temp,
when fans hum less, and we are
left, without a phone, when I
am alone, when you
are alone

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Commentary

Annie Brown

"I Roared and I Rampaged and I Got Bloody Satisfaction":[1] Artistic Ethics and Gendered Representations of Violence in the Films of Quentin Tarantino

I was about fifteen when I was introduced to the work of Quentin Tarantino. It was probably 2011, and I had just earned the privilege of having a TV in my room. Like many kids, I would often flip through the channels late at night looking for something to watch as I fell asleep. One evening, I happened to stumble upon *Pulp Fiction.* I had heard of the film but knew virtually nothing about it; something about it made me put down the remote and keep watching. Granted, I probably should not have been watching such an intense, R-rated film at fifteen (sorry, Mom and Dad), but I found myself immediately fascinated by the stylized violence, intricate narrative, and compelling characters.

Since I began college, I have participated in more ice-breaker activities than I would prefer, during which many friends and professors asked me about my favorite films. My immediate reply always involves something in Tarantino's oeuvre; I have learned that my answer prompts either curiosity or indignant surprise. I find that those who are fellow admirers of Tarantino's work typically react positively, while those who react negatively have little experience with his films or have simply misunderstood him. As I have been a fan of Tarantino's films for years, I admit I have some favorable bias towards his work. However, conversations with friends prompted me to consider the controversy surrounding the prolific director in order to understand why he is such a divisive figure.

[1] A few words from The Bride (*Kill Bill, Vol. 2*).

Throughout the course of his thirty-year career, Tarantino has consistently pushed boundaries in his representations of violence, particularly against women and people of color, who frequently serve as central characters in Tarantino's films. As a white, male, twentieth-century-born filmmaker, Tarantino's depictions of women and minorities garner both praise and outrage. In today's strained socio-political environment, artists like Tarantino often find themselves scrutinized in the media as society becomes increasingly aware of the politics of representation. Scholars and critics alike endlessly debate whether artists have a right to depict the experiences of communities to which they have no ties, especially in such taboo contexts as Tarantino chooses to create in his films. The questions on the minds of many critics concern the ethics of artistic representation of violence, particularly gendered and racial violence. I myself wonder: is it within Tarantino's rights as an artist to depict graphic violence against already vulnerable communities? Furthermore, is it justifiable?

Unsurprisingly, Tarantino's earliest screenplays draw criticism for the marked absence of women in main roles. *Reservoir Dogs* lacks any female characters, while *True Romance* relegates its women to the role of voiceless sex workers. However, over the last twenty years or so, Tarantino has exhibited the development of a more nuanced style in which female characters are as authentic and compelling as their male counterparts. *Pulp Fiction* (1994) features the now iconic Uma Thurman as Mia Wallace, who poses seductively in bed with a cigarette in hand on the film's famous promotional poster. From the first allusion to her identity by hitmen Vincent and Jules (John Travolta and Samuel L. Jackson, respectively), the film defines Mia by her relationship to men. She is crime boss Marsellus's (Ving Rhames) wife, but Vincent finds himself ensnared by her seductive and mysterious traits as she acts as a prototypical Manic Pixie Dream Girl of sorts. Her sexual agency is intriguing, but fairly simplistic in comparison to the

motivations of the men around her. However, Tarantino adds dimension to Mia's character as the film confronts the issue of her cocaine addiction. Throughout the film, Mia dances and wisecracks with Vincent, all while sneaking away to snort lines of cocaine. When Mia overdoses and nearly dies, Tarantino shatters any fantasy of her being a perfect, sexualized object. No longer is she mysterious or enticing; she is deeply flawed and dangerous for Vincent, yet not a villain. Tarantino provides an opportunity for a woman to play a key role in the narrative, one which is sympathetic, compelling, and complex. Not only is Mia vital to the plot's unfolding, she also shows Tarantino's interest in nuanced female characters. Furthermore, *Pulp Fiction* served to solidify the artistic relationship between Thurman and Tarantino that would later blossom in the *Kill Bill* series.

Since *Pulp Fiction*, Tarantino's female characters have become even stronger and savvier. Just three years after *Pulp Fiction*, Tarantino released *Jackie Brown* (1997), which stars Pam Grier as a middle-aged, African-American con-woman. Tarantino chose a black, female criminal as the protagonist of his film, a decision far more progressive than he made in any of his previous films. Although *Jackie Brown* gained critical attention, it is one of Tarantino's lesser-known works; however, both films in the *Kill Bill* series remain extremely popular and influential. Thurman stars as Beatrix Kiddo (a.k.a. The Bride), a heroine who is sexy and feminine yet unafraid, frequently bloodied, beaten, and covered in dirt. While she twirls and slinks through the series in tight jeans, snakeskin boots, and her iconic yellow and black jumpsuit, she is far more than a mere sexual object. As she endures stabbings, beatings, a shot to the head, the loss of her child, rape, and being buried alive, Kiddo stands out as Tarantino's most powerful heroine. The inclusion of such a resilient female protagonist shows arguably positive development in the kinds of characters Tarantino seems compelled to depict. However, many

critics and moviegoers alike criticize the series for its depiction of violence against women. A double-standard exists in the film: the abuse against Kiddo is somewhat sanitized, while the battles against her enemies are bloody celebrations of vengeance.

While Kiddo survives horrific injury, the majority of the violence perpetrated against her occurs off-screen, and she returns each time to wreak increasingly vicious vengeance upon her attackers. Vernita Green (Vivica A. Fox), Elle Driver (Daryl Hannah), and O-Ren Ishii (Lucy Liu) all meet gruesome ends at the hands of Kiddo, but this brutal violence seems justified as revenge for their attack on Kiddo, which catalyzed the events of the series. Despite eventually being crossed off Kiddo's hit list, O-Ren Ishii exhibits many of the same admirable qualities as her heroic counterpart. Tarantino provides a gut-wrenching backstory for Ishii, which makes us sympathetic to her in spite of her role as villain. Likewise, Ishii proves to be a mighty force not only as a killer but also as a businesswoman who delivers swift punishment with her sword. Tarantino's characterization of Ishii is fascinating and prompts me to question whether I should cheer for her death at all. Ishii and Kiddo alike contain multitudes, both rise from unspeakable trauma, yet the entire telos of the series is for Kiddo to win. We cheer for Kiddo because of her victim status and admire her ability to fight against equal opponents even when they come in dozens. While Bill, Ishii, and her other attackers show cowardice in brutalizing her while she is pregnant or, later, unconscious, Kiddo fights with honor on an even playing field. In my view, the fact that this is a story of a victim's revenge justifies the violence in this film, but countless critics vehemently disagree, attesting that it is unethical for a privileged, white, male artist to profit from graphic fantasies of violence against a portion of the population to which he does not belong. For many viewers, Tarantino's career is another chapter in a long history of white men profiting from the violent oppression of women and minority communities.

The question remains: is Tarantino justified in depicting violence against women, or should directors, writers, and other artists like him avoid such problematic scenarios entirely? Put simply, I believe Tarantino indeed has both the *right* to create the characters he chooses and the *responsibility* to depict the challenging realities of the world and engage with difficult topics like patriarchal violence that we might rather overlook. It is easier and more comfortable to ignore the hierarchical systems under our noses, but Tarantino chooses to represent women in multifaceted, imperfect roles to force audiences to consider the prejudices we bring to each viewing. By portraying women as resolute, resourceful, or relentlessly vengeful, Tarantino subverts audience expectations of his heroines and villainesses, leading us to question narrative conventions of gender and sexuality. Tarantino's women are fearsome and intelligent, with characters like Beatrix Kiddo serving as inspirations to artists and ordinary audiences alike. Kiddo, Ishii, Mia Wallace, and even the villainous Daisy Domergue (Jennifer Jason Leigh) in Tarantino's most recent release prompt viewers to reexamine how media typically reduces women to stereotypical fantasies. The violence against women in *Pulp Fiction*, *Kill Bill*, and, more recently, *The Hateful Eight* (2015) proves difficult to stomach but forces audiences to confront the reality that women are more complicated than simple objects of desire.

When I first watched Tarantino's films, I was simultaneously shocked by the violence and intrigued by his representation of women. With more recent viewings, I find that some of his characterizations of women are dated and colored by his own masculine perspective, but I appreciate Tarantino's efforts to cast someone other than a white male in leading roles. By allowing Thurman, Liu, and others to shine in their roles as women with both admirable and questionable traits, Tarantino facilitates conversation surrounding nuanced female experiences and identities, while also shining a light on the systems of oppression used to silence women

even in the twenty-first century. Quentin Tarantino's films may appall more sensitive audiences, but it is vital for artists like him to continue to challenge spectators to consider society's prejudices and our own biases. Current discourse surrounding artistic ethics begs viewers to think critically about the media surrounding them, which I believe is absolutely necessary to be an ethical consumer. Personally, my respect for Tarantino has not faded with time; rather, his groundbreaking heroines, such as Mia Wallace, O-Ren Ishii, and especially Beatrix Kiddo, continue to inspire me as a creator, a lover of film, and a modern woman.

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Commentary

Claire Davis

Periodically: An Argument for Respecting Serial Fiction

Serialized fiction dominates our narrative landscape. Novels come in series, movie companies have cinematic universes with arcs that stretch over several films, and television shows have increasingly become the scene of new and inventive storytelling with hits such as *Stranger Things*, *Black Mirror*, and *Breaking Bad*. Nor is the syndicated story an especially modern concept: authors such as Charles Dickens, Alexandre Dumas, and Arthur Conan Doyle famously wrote their works chapter by chapter for periodicals in the nineteenth century, creating a culture of fanatic magazine readers who raced to the stands to find out just who was the mysterious Count of Monte Cristo and how Holmes had solved it this time. As technology progressed, the avenues for spreading serial stories also expanded, as radio programs such as *The Lone Ranger* and *Little Orphan Annie* took the airwaves by storm, only to be replaced by television shows of all varieties. Even Sunday newspaper cartoons, considered by some to be the lowest forms of narrative in the modern age, are still published in a serial manner, with some like *Prince Valiant* and *Dick Tracey* maintaining constant, evolving plots rather than following a joke-per-week format. Nevertheless, as streaming services allow my friends and me to "binge" episode after episode of our favorite shows, a question arises about the ethics of consuming these ostensibly periodical stories in fractions of the time devoted to their on-air counterparts. Is there an ethic behind consuming serial stories, due to their structure, or is the audience justified in consuming the narratives as it can, even if that means finishing the story

in one fell swoop? How much should the reader stand by the original pacing and format of the story?

Historically, audiences of serial stories had little to no control over how they read the narrative. Chapters in serial novels were released on a specific schedule, which depended on the productivity of the author and the press. In the case of radio shows and television before recording technology was available to the average household, it was impossible to consume any installment outside of when the station decided to air it, which drastically affects how the audience reacts to the story. In these situations, the audience molds its life to accommodate the schedule of the story rather than consume the story at its leisure. In contrast, while the modern audience still has to wait for the next season of a television show or the next book in a series, the time between installments that had previously been enforced by air times and limited availability has shrunk to a negligible level. In an odd twist, television shows have become a modern equivalent of the novel, as viewers have entire seasons at their disposal, separated by fifteen seconds of buffering time. Cliffhangers that once held people at the edge of their seats for a week are now satisfied in minutes, and character arcs take place over hours, rather than weeks or even months. As a result, the conversations about television have changed around me as I have grown up; the language surrounding shows has become one of completion rather than continual interest. In my own suite, we swap recommendations for shows based on the entirety of it, rather than its potential, even in the case of shows that are still in production. Our interest isn't based on the progression of a story; it is based instead on the resolution of a story, a mindset that combats decades of formulaic storytelling in television.

The collapsed time-frame of modern consumption of serial stories has led to a few innovative ways to maintain that sense of suspense and enforced release. A few years ago, the

idea of "literary geocaching" spread across a small group of digitally minded storytellers, who created stories housed on apps that would update only on a predetermined schedule. In some cases, the stories updated through rigid time schedules, as in the case of the choose-your-own-adventure game *Lifeline*, a text-based game of communications with a stranded astronaut who seeks your advice but, as he points out, does need to sleep and will go offline for eight or more hours, which play out in real time (Qu, n. pag.). In others, the schedule is tied more to location, which forces the reader to actually travel to physical locations before the next installment becomes available. The most popular of these was *The Silent History*, an e-book that had a complete narrative that could be read anywhere but also housed reader-supplied "field reports" that could be read only in a specific location, such as a street corner or front stoop. Through the very technology that made syndicated narratives available wholesale, authors enforced a strictly paced experience similar to the television and radio shows of old. I myself attempted to consume all of these "literary geocaching" narratives that I could find but ultimately could read only one: *Breathe: A Ghost Story* by Kate Pullinger, which used my phone camera and location to draw in nearby visuals and locations to personalize the horror (though, admittedly, it sourced my location to London rather than Birmingham, Alabama, which lessened the promised impact somewhat). The strict, locational nature of "literary geocaching" itself maintains a strict ethical standard for consuming stories: either follow the producers' rules and travel to fully consume the narrative, or risk missing a part of the story by not adjusting your schedule to accommodate the story. Nevertheless, these stories by the nature of their locality remain inaccessible to the vast majority of possible audience members, and the general lack of knowledge about them in common discussions about literature reflects their failure as narrative modes. The public's rejection of these narratives shows that in general, we as a society have our limits when it comes to

accommodating stories. Scheduling time for an hour-long television episode is manageable; driving across towns and states is not.

Another way that creators have combatted the accelerated pacing of shows due to binging is to create shows that follow a specific theme rather than certain characters. Most famously, Netflix's series *Black Mirror*, like *The Twilight Zone* before it, writes episodes that do not reuse characters or locations and remain short films whole in themselves. If more conventional, narrative television show seasons are analogous to novels, then the effect of viewing such a season of episodes back-to-back mimics instead an anthology of short stories or poems, each being distinct and separate works but contributing also to an overarching theme. Because of their contained narrative arcs, one gets the idea that to binge such a series takes away from the individual impact of a single story, which can cause a reader to pause in their marathon in order to better appreciate the works as a whole.

Nevertheless, something about following specific characters through trials and tribulations is still much more appealing to audiences than a collection of short stories, no matter how gripping or thematically relevant they might be, which points to the enduring nature of serialized fiction. Despite today's shift in pacing, serialized fiction still gives the writers room to unfold plot and build character gradually, which leads to a more organic story. Novels cannot ramble forever and maintain the complexity that well-written serial stories achieve precisely because the story is forcibly spaced out to allow deeper reflection on the past installments. This is one of the complaints against canonical, serial novels by today's readers: while *Les Misérables* seems exhaustive and needlessly complicated when read in one sitting, its first audience would not feel the weight of a hundred pages about the Napoleonic Wars because it consumed those one hundred pages over the course of weeks or even months.

Despite all this, though, the fact that modern readers encounter such classics as *Les Misérables* and *Great Expectations* almost exclusively in bound, collected form somewhat negates my debate. Would a reader experience the narrative as the producer intended if he or she were to read each chapter sequentially after appropriate pauses? Certainly. Would that same reader ultimately enjoy the experience more or somehow read the story in a "truer" sense? Maybe. Consuming a serial story in the space of a day condenses it to an indistinct shadow of the original show, as watching episode after episode back-to-back leads to sensory overload. No matter how experienced a viewer is to the art of binging, details of plot and character development will escape notice after several hours of content, and while it may seem that watching an entire season in one go would keep the narrative fresh in mind, in my experience, the effect feels more like a hazy fever dream than an enjoyable foray into a creative world.

One result of this flattening of the narrative affects the phenomenon of "filler episodes" in a show. Filler episodes, or chapters of a narrative that step away from the main conflict to allow a pause in the plot and allow a chance for subtle character growth, used to help broaden the narrative's world, either by focusing on how daily life functions or how a character interacts with people and situations on a less threatening level. When I ask my friends for some of their favorite episodes of narrative childhood shows, such as *Avatar: the Last Airbender*, their answers almost always fall into the category of filler episodes precisely because these episodes take the time to create depth in characters and their situations, which I have already indicated may be the lasting importance of serial fiction. However, these filler episodes in modern shows, which my friends and I binge wholeheartedly, often get rated today as unnecessary or boring, despite being the exact same sort of episode as our favorites from other shows. While these episodes still may provide rest and characterization, we do not give them the space to serve their role. In a paced

intake, these narrative asides thrive; in a binge, all they do is distract from the main plot, which is close to the only thing we can focus on amid the barrage of information available in seven hours or more of narrative.

Filler episodes are not the only formulaic aspect of television that suffers from binging. Character arcs and conflicts alike also come across as less organic and less important after hours of involvement with them. The longer a character struggles, both internally and externally, the more satisfactory resolution becomes when the final blow lands, and the audience's commitment to the characters and their cause feels more genuine when it lasts over weeks rather than over hours. Almost paradoxically, setting aside the time for such stories continually and habitually in daily life involves us more deeply in the story than consciously losing ourselves in the world for several consecutive hours, during which time boredom and anxieties about other commitments will surely set in. If we truly value serial forms like television and audio dramas for their complexity and segmented nature, then we as viewers ought to respect their form to the degree that we can to experience the story in the best way we can.

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Commentary

Regan Green

Preserving the Author Postmortem

On July 5 of 2018, *The Nation* published a poem called "How-To," and on July 24, in response to a caustic torrent of criticism on social media from the public, the poetry editors added an editor's note to the page, an apology for the poem. In this apology, which is longer than the poem itself, the editors offer their regrets for their "serious mistake" in publishing the poem (Carlson-Wee, n. pag.). A few lines from "How-To" read as follows:

> Don't say homeless, they know
> you is. What they don't know is what opens
> a wallet, what stops em from counting
> what they drop. (Carlson-Wee, n. pag.)

The public's issue with the poem was that the speaker seems to be disabled, homeless, and drawing on black vernacular, and that the poet, Anders Carlson-Wee, is white. Personally, I do not take issue with this poem. I read it as a critique of the ironic sanctimony of compassion, of those who are motivated to give to charity by the feeling of self-satisfaction that comes with it. Despite what this commentary probably looks like so far, I am not interested in writing a politically provocative piece or in commenting on race relations. Rather, I hope to explore the intersection (if there is one) where morality meets art and invite us to reconsider the implications of regulating this intersection. In recent months, there has been a series of similarly controversial events: for example, because Scarlett Johansson is not transgender, she backed out of a transgender role for which she had been cast, and a play directed by Robert Lepage was cut off early, because its cast of white actors played characters who were black slaves (Schuessler, n.

pag.**)**. But this one, because it falls into the field of creative writing, falls a little closer to home for me and has further confused an already complicated question that I (along with the rest of society) have been asking for several months now: can we separate the art from the artist (in this case, the writer from the speaker)? Is it specific to circumstance? And if so, where should we draw the line?

I believe that the instance cited above is an example of this issue being handled poorly. In its criticism, the public has assumed that the speaker and the writer of the poem are one and the same, which is a slippery and unwarranted assumption. Where would we be today if we operated on this principle? Camus would have rotted in jail for a murder committed by his narrator in the lucid, Algerian sunlight, and J.D. Salinger's (arguably) good name would have been defiled by his own narrator when he paid a prostitute for her services. It is inappropriate to blame the artist for the transgression of the art—and vice versa. A writer cannot appropriate anything if he or she is not the speaker of the poem. This is the unique beauty of creative works—the writer is free to express an idea by using the speaker as a mouthpiece or by using the speaker as an example of someone who has fallen prey to the dangers of an opposing idea, or to not express an idea at all. If we take away that freedom, then we take away that which distinguishes creative works from other writing. Everything may as well be nonfiction. There is only one appropriate time to assume that the speaker *is* in fact the writer: when one is studying the writer's diary entries (and maybe grocery lists).

I would like to propose a compromise between the marriage of the art to the artist and the death of the artist, to play on the terminology of Roland Barthes. This was one of the deeper marks left by the postmodern movement: Barthes' essay "The Death of the Author" proposes that we completely detach the author from the writing. According to Barthes, it doesn't matter

whether or not Carlson-Wee intended to appropriate a language that wasn't his or whether he intended to critique a flaw in the system of charity: "We shall never know, for the good reason that writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing" (166). How can we reconcile Barthes' philosophy with that of our modern society? How can we condemn a dead body? Today it seems impossible to return fully to Barthes' ideology, but I think that it would be worthwhile to attempt to find a liminal space between Barthes' extreme and the extreme of our present reality. Rather than using the art to condemn the artist or the artist to condemn the art, and rather than ignoring or repressing the obvious interactions between the two, I suggest that we simply let the one inform and enrich the other.

Here is an example of an instance in which it seems more appropriate to *not* separate the art from the artist, which I believe was handled well: the Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft dedicated one of their exhibits to the sculptor and printmaker Eric Gill (1882 – 1940). Some of the work centers on his two daughters, one in particular being a rendering of his daughter Petra in the bath when she was a young girl (Güner, n. pag.). This drawing seemed perfectly innocent and was admired by many until 1989, when Fiona MacCarthy wrote a biography revealing that Gill had sexually abused both of his daughters when they were young teenagers. After this information was publicized, art-goers and Gill-buffs could no longer look at these works in the same way. As art critic Fisun Güner put it in her article on the exhibit, "What you saw was altered by what you knew" (n. pag.). The Ditchling did not formally acknowledge the tension between the artist's work and his personal life until 2017, and when they finally did, it was not to censor the images or to apologize for displaying them. Rather the museum now presents the

public with the objective information and invites them to consider the work in this new light. As the Ditchling webpage for the exhibit reads, “Within Gill’s work, the human body is of central importance; this major exhibition asks whether knowledge of Gill’s disturbing biography affects our enjoyment and appreciation of his depiction of the human figure” (Eric Gill: The Body, n. pag.). In this example, I believe the relationship between art and artist was handled with remarkable grace. The Ditchling neither apologized for the exhibit nor ignored the tension between the artist and his art. Because Gill’s life was so relevant to his work, they found it important to provide the public with this information within their exhibit so that the viewers can see the art through a more illuminating lens and form their own questions and answers.

I am not arguing that readers should not take offense to the content of Carlson-Wee’s poem; that is an issue of personal interpretation. I am presenting the reasoning for my opinion that *The Nation* should not have apologized for publishing it. Caravaggio was a murderer, but the Galleria Borghese does not apologize for displaying six of his paintings. Of course, in the case that the artist’s biographical information is relevant to the work, such as when the work deals with the artist’s disturbing relationship with his daughters, then this information can be presented alongside the work and used as an enlightening lens. Similarly, “How-To” could have been published with Carlson-Wee’s biographical information so that the readers could experience the poem through the lens of his skin color. This would provide readers with insights to supplement their experience of the work while maintaining that the writer and the speaker are not the same being. It’s a sensitive subject, and mine is an unpopular opinion, but I submit this as a graceful and prudent way to preserve the author postmortem.

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Commentary

Hannah Warrick

"You Are the Most Bookish-Looking Book that I Ever Saw in my Life."

A couple years ago, in a cloud of boredom (I hadn't read anything "for fun" for who knows how long), I typed "Best Science Fiction of 2016" in my search browser. The first Google entry led to a blog, listing the top ten "Science-Fiction/Fantasy Books of 2016." For each book listed, there was a blurb that roughly explained the plot of the book and included a picture of the book's cover. Despite being an English major, I skimmed the blurbs, and my eyes drifted to the pretty covers with their bright colors and stunning illustrations. There was one cover in particular that grabbed my attention; it pictured a flock of birds that swarmed around the title of the novel, *All the Birds in the Sky*, against a dark navy background (for cover art, visit https://us.macmillan.com/books/9780765379955). I don't think I even read the blurb; the birds were just so pretty, the design was lively but uniform, and the color contrast between white and navy was striking. I plopped the book in my online cart, payed about $20 dollars for the hardcover, and waited eagerly for it to arrive in the mail. Sadly, reading the book was not as exciting as receving the Amazon package. In my opinion, the novel was just "okay." The characters were interesting, yet inconsistent at times, and the ending, well, I still don't understand that last chapter. I most likely won't read the novel again, but at least it can sit and look pretty on my shelf: an interesting conversation piece but unfortunately not a literary recommendation.

You've probably heard the saying "don't judge a book by its cover" sometime in your life. My mom used it as an example, saying that you can't possibly judge someone's genuine

character based soley on his or her outward appearance. While this may be a common expression, I have noticed that the literal meaning of the idiom is slowly becoming obsolete. In an image-saturated age of ads, Netflix, and smartphone applications, we are subtly encouraged to judge things by their outward, visual appearances. Novels, which are primarily composed of text, are marked by a visual stamp of approval by their covers. When I peruse the Barnes and Noble fiction section, it feels as if I'm walking through an art gallery. I'm given the title, the author, and the image by which I can make my own interpretation about the book's content or if it is even worth reading. The question becomes, are book covers simply geared toward the "aesthetic" or the visual pleasure of the consumer? Do they function as "ads," commodifying the novel into a sellable object rather than a literary artifact? Do book covers seek to represent the content of their novels through vibrant illustrations and fancy lettering, or do their striking visuals simply deceive the reader into paying $15 for a novel they've never heard of?

I once bought a book because it was yellow. The synopsis sounded a little interesting, too, but really, I *love* the color yellow. You could say that yellow is my "aesthetic preference." I like yellow, not because it has some deep moral, philosophical, or rational value, but because it's bright, happy, and makes me happy. I'm reminded of the scene in Oscar Wilde's play *The Importance of Being Earnest* when Algernon tells Ernest, whose real name is Jack, "I have introduced you to everyone as Ernest. . . . You look as if your name was Ernest. You are the most earnest-looking person I ever saw in my life" (Wilde, n. pag.). Similarly, I look at a book cover whose elaborate design catches my eye, and I think to myself, "You look as if you were a good Book. You are the most Bookish-looking book I ever saw in my life." Wilde's play *The Importance of Being Earnest* characterizes the attitude of the Aesthetic Movement, which began in the latter half of the Victorian Period. The movement advocated for the pursuit of artistic

experimentation and dismantled the moral, rational, and philosophical foundations of art, literature, and culture. Art no longer held a moral or educational responsibly to "teach" its audience, but it could just provide a purely aesthetic experience for the viewer. I feel that in some ways, this obsession with the "aesthetic" has resurfaced under the guise of Postmodernism. Images are divorced from their historical origins and recycled into sellable objects for the consumer. I wonder if book covers do the same for novels. Similar to Algernon, who unapologetically consumes his favorite muffins, I consume books whose covers make me happy, according to my aesthetic preferences. Sometimes, as with the case of *All the Birds in the Sky*, I feel dissatisfied. The novel did not live up to the aesthetic promise that the cover promised. The birds in the book weren't as pretty as the birds on the cover.

Tracing the thread of Postmodernism, one could also view book covers as a way to commodify a book into a sellable object that whitewashes the book's literary value. Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, a book that advocates for the conservation of stories, has been reprinted dozens of times since its publication in 1953. With each new edition, the book was given a different cover. Of course, while Bradbury would most likely be delighted with the survival of his novel, is its popularity due to the novel's impactful story or the delightful covers that artists have created to encourage its selling? Each cover pertains to the content of the novel, but are they ads that scream, "Buy me! Again!"? Or are they genuine attempts to interest the public in the story's content? In the case of *Fahrenheit 451,* the number of new editions might be a little excessive. Do we really need twenty-four different depictions of burning books? Jesse Doogan, a writer for the blog BOOKRIOT, shares her opinion:

> When my book club decided to read *Fahrenheit 451*, I realized I had a unique opportunity to re-buy a book I already owned. I mean, at least an opportunity to justify

> my re-buying a book I already owned! I am not sure where my copy from high school is, and if I do find it, it might be full of my high-school-required booknoting. It's the perfect reason to go shopping for some of the coolest (heh) editions of *Fahrenheit 451*. (Doogan, n. pag.)

I can't judge Jesse for wanting to buy the "coolest editions" of *Fahrenheit 451*, considering what I've already confessed about my own book-buying habits, but her response does make me question the reason we buy books at all. The amount of reprinting for this novel seems excessive and potentially lessens the impact of the *Farenheit 451*'s central thesis: the importance of literature in conserving culture, history, and narrative. In other words, the consumer may buy the novel not because of any genuine interest in the "literature" or content but because the novel has been reframed as a visual, nostalgic token, in other words, a commofied, collectible item. I don't have anything against collectibles, especially antique ones, but shouldn't books be purchased primarily for their literary value rather than how they look on the shelf?

So far, I've critiqued book covers rather heavily and accused them of potentially hiding the literary value of books. Should all our book covers just be stark white, with titles printed in Times New Roman font across the page? As an Art minor, I shudder at the thought. In fact, I would love to be given the opportunity to design a book cover, and the expulsion of book covers may prohibit an author from having their work recognized or even read. In some ways, I think that cover art can help preserve the literary identity of a work: a thoughtful cover can encapsulate the central focus or plot of the book and present it to the reader as a "sneak-peek" of sorts. The cover of a novel that I am currently reading, *Little Fires Everywhere* by Celeste Ng, pictures a vibrant landscape of a calm and green neighborhood, yet one of the houses looks as if it may be quietly burning (for cover art, visit https://www.celesteng.com/little-fires-everywhere). The light

could just be artficial light in the house; however, the story begins with a house fire, so this warm glow might not be as "homey" as one might initially think. The cover alludes to the critique the novel makes on the tidy, perfect neighborhood community of Shaker Heights. People are obsessed with keeping their problems "indoors," away from the prying, judging eyes of their peers, but this façade eventually explodes (literally). In this case, the cover is both aesthetically pleasing and striking, but it has a deeper meaning pertaining to the content of the story.

If book covers can be ads or visual texts that prepare the reader for the central narrative, can they also stand alone as works of art? It would be difficult to find a book cover that bears no resemblance to the novel; however, there are some covers that are appreciated mainly for their artistry and composition. In June 2018, Scholastic released a new edition of the Harry Potter books, featuring brand new cover art designed by prominent illustrator Brian Selznick, to commenerate the series's twentieth anniversary of its U.S. publication (Scholastic, n. pag.). The new covers, "rendered in Selznick's stunning signature black-and-white style," depict specific action scenes and central characters from the books (for cover art, visit https://harrypotterbooks.scholastic.com/20th-anniversary-editions). When placed sided by the side, the covers form a single image that relays the general plot of the entire seires (Scholastic, n. pag.). In an interview, Selznick commented on his approach: "One of the most challenging and rewarding aspects of the process was drawing seven independent covers that would stand on their own, while making sure that they also lined up to create a single satisfying image. It took dozens and dozens of sketches to get it right . . . " (qtd. in Scholastic, n. pag.). In this new edition of the series, Selznick is not simply creating a design to "fit" the book's content but a work of fine art to commemorate it. Of course, the illustration alludes to the storyline and does not stand alone as *l'art pour l'art*, since it is *l'art pour Harry Potter*; however, Selznick's illustrations do

retain a type of automony. The final, collective image stands alone as its own independent artwork, able to be enjoyed for its style and composition. While I still fear that the release of collectible editions may commodify books, I greatly appreciate the artistry and work that Selznick has put into crafting these covers. Of course Scholastic would like you to purchase this collectible edition, but rather than just screaming, "Buy me!", Selznick's detailed, lively illustraions indicate a love for the series, showcase the skill of a professional artist, and altogether create an impressive piece of artwork.

So then, should we judge books by their covers? Of course not. We shouldn't determine a book's worth according to our own aesthetic preferences—you probably shouldn't buy a book just because it's yellow or has birds on it or looks super cool on the shelf. A book's literary worth shouldn't be reduced to the expertise or artistic shortcomings of the illustrator who designed the cover. Neither should we always dismiss book covers as capitalist strategies for continued buying, as some reprinted covers can showcase brilliant works of art that are worthy of recognition. The ideal book cover would allude to, comment on, or foreshadow the story of the novel through its design, and in this case, the artistic value of a work would double as both the story and the cover art interact in a seminotic relationship. I think that the responsibility ultimately falls to the reader in navigating the "aesthetic ad strategies" in buying books. There will always be good books with bad covers and bad books with good covers, but it is up to the reader to decide what kind of buyer he or she would like to be: an aesthetic consumer or a thoughtful reader. I am trying to become the latter.

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Commentary

Emily Youree

Orfeo in the Otherworld: Adaptation of the Classics in the Middle Ages

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Our culture is fascinated by the Middle Ages. Nowhere is this fixation more apparent than in fiction, in which George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* dominates the fantasy genre with its roots in the British Wars of the Roses, and recent works of medieval historical fiction such as Paul Kingsworth's *The Wake* gain critical acclaim. I am no exception to this trend, reveling in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and Brian Jacques's *Redwall* series as a child before tearing through T.H. White's *The Once and Future King* and Howard Pyle's *Adventures of Robin Hood* in middle school and high school. However, despite my enthusiasm for medievalism, I have discovered that I have held a plethora of misunderstandings about the Middle Ages. These misconceptions spring from a variety of sources, including popular culture and even textbooks. One of the most surprising discoveries in my studies of medievalism often falls into the latter category: the assumption that the classical tradition vanished during the Middle Ages.

Most of us are familiar with the popular historical narrative of the Middle Ages: after the sack of Rome in 410 CE, Europe fell into chaos and barbarism, and the sophistication of classical literature and philosophy was lost until its miraculous rediscovery and revival in the Renaissance. For much of my life, I was content with this narrative and my cursory assessment that between the bookends of St. Augustine of Hippo and Dante lay a period of intellectual stagnation caused in great part by the loss of classical Latin and Greek texts. However, as I continued my studies in literature, references to Demosthenes in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and

King Arthur's fabled conquest of Rome in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* forced me to question my assumptions about the death of the classics.

The final blow to my neat compartmentalization of the Roman, medieval, and Renaissance eras came when I lighted upon *Sir Orfeo*, a Middle English poem composed in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century (Tolkien 19). As the name suggests, the poem retells the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, made famous in Virgil's *Georgics*, written in the first century CE ("Virgil"). Almost a thousand years after the sack of Rome and hundreds of miles away, an anonymous poet adapted this ancient myth in his or her own language. *Sir Orfeo* is not alone in this tradition: many of the most famous works of classical literature survived the tumult of the fifth century to remain extant in the Middle Ages, if only in fragmentary references or oral tradition. A handful of these classically influenced poems survives to the present, including retellings of the *Aeneid*, of the *Thebaid*, and of the Trojan War. Reading *Sir Orfeo*, I realized that reports of the classics' death have been greatly exaggerated.

This is not to say that medieval retellings of Greek and Roman stories are pristine preservations of their originals. The author of *Sir Orfeo* likely never set eyes on a copy of Virgil's *Georgics* and was likely adapting a gallicized version of the myth (Tolkien 20). The story of Sir Orfeo is quite different from the story of Orpheus, as one might expect from the temporal and spatial divide between the Virgilian and Middle English retellings, as well as the long chain of adaptations that occurred between them. Both narratives follow the same basic pattern: a talented musician loses his wife and decides to venture beyond the bounds of mortal existence to win her back. However, while in the classical myth Orpheus's curiosity causes him to lose his wife forever, in *Sir Orfeo*, the titular hero returns home with his beloved. Although this is arguably the most major narrative disparity in the two stories, a difference in setting also

distinguishes *Sir Orfeo* from its Roman predecessor. *Sir Orfeo* takes place in Winchester, England, "for Winchester, 'tis certain, then / as Tracience [i.e. Thrace] was known to men" (*Sir Orfeo* lines 49-50). Sir Orfeo is its king, descended on his father's side from "King Pluto" (29) and on his mother's from "King Juno" (30), "who once of old as gods were named / for mighty deeds they did and claimed" (31-32). These references to Roman gods are so disconnected from their original context that the sex of Juno has shifted from female to male. These connections to Greco-Roman names are the closest references to historical accuracy that the poem offers.

However, many of these changes in "Sir Orfeo" bring new insight to the poem and new facets to the story of Orpheus. Rather than journeying to the Underworld, as Virgil's Orpheus does, Orfeo's adventure leads him to the realm of the Faerie king, who has stolen away Orfeo's wife, Heuridis. This kingdom is not an Underworld, into which the hero travels down through the earth, but an Otherworld parallel to our reality. Rather than dying as Eurydice does, Heuridis simply vanishes into thin air, with the whole host of her husband's army powerless to stop her kidnapping (187-192). This minor difference in plot reveals an entirely different view of the supernatural: the otherworldly does not exist in a neat, vertical stack, as in the Olympus-Earth-Underworld divisions of Greco-Roman mythology, but in a plane alongside our own reality. In this conception of the Otherworld, the supernatural breathes down the necks of all people in all places. Within this anglicized ordering of the supernatural, based in Celtic religious customs and philosophies, reality behaves in dramatically different ways than in the Greco-Roman view, offering a new perspective on a vital part of the text.

Although it is true that many original Latin and Greek texts were lost to Europe for centuries after the crumbling of the Roman Empire, the stories recorded in them did not simply vanish from existence until Petrarch's lifetime—as *Sir Orfeo* demonstrates. The legends of

Aeneas and Achilles and the philosophy of Plato were incorporated into the literary canon of the Middle Ages, altering and being altered by their cultural surroundings—whether in England or in North Africa. Although the humanists of the Renaissance saw these adaptations as corruptions and privileged original works over their medieval variants, their assessment should not be passively accepted as objective truth, especially in light of modern adaptation theory. After all, what is an original? Virgil's telling of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice is the first by a major Roman author, but the brilliant Roman poet Ovid produced his own adaptation of the tale shortly afterward in his *Metamorphoses*. Is Ovid's necessarily inferior to Virgil's? Is Boethius's telling five hundred years later inferior to either of theirs? The adaptation of this myth (and all adaptations) is turtles all the way down (Wright). Renaissance thinkers disregarded the use of classics during the Middle Ages because they became adaptations, but modern readers and thinkers should not be so hasty in their evaluations. Adaptations are not the death of the original, and they enhance rather than detract from art.

Culture retains ideas whether we acknowledge them or not, and the Middle Ages were no exception. Despite the misconceptions of medieval intellectual dormancy that we have inherited from Renaissance thinkers, the medieval world never fully forgot the classical tradition. Their adaptations of Greek and Roman texts affected the reception of classical stories and philosophies in the Renaissance, which, in a domino effect, influences our interpretation of every classically influenced work since. In a world that constantly turns to the Middle Ages to process both the past and the present, an accurate understanding of medieval literature and its classical influences is important for all enthusiasts of the Middle Ages—from academic medievalists to *Game of Thrones* fans.

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