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The Ashen Egg

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Submission guidelines: *The Ashen Egg* is an annual journal publishing essays on literature, rhetoric, linguistics, film, and popular culture. Any current Western Kentucky University undergraduate student may submit work for consideration. Submissions must be endorsed by an English Department faculty member who confirms the

submission as a piece produced for one of the faculty member's courses and approves it as worthy for publication. Manuscripts may range from 750 to 3000 words, though exceptions may be made for submissions of stellar quality. Literature, film, and pop culture essays must follow the Modern Language Association style guidelines as defined in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (latest edition); essays on linguistics or professional writing topics may use APA (latest edition). Submissions must be received no later than December 6 and must be accompanied by the cover sheet and endorsement form to be considered.

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2023 TED HOVET UNDERGRADUATE CONFERENCE ON
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NOTE ON CONTRIBUTORS

Bobbi Coffee is a literature major and creative writing minor from Louisville, Kentucky. They're looking forward to graduating this fall, but not looking forward to actually adulting. If they're not running around doing interviews for *The Talisman*, they're usually holed up in a private study room in Cravens. If you see them in the hall, ask them about their cat Thunder or what they're currently writing. They'll only have an answer for one.

Valerie Feldker is a senior from Bloomington, IL, studying Creative Writing with a minor in Astronomy. She has always enjoyed creating stories and learning more about the world around her. Outside of books, she loves to hike, play sports, draw, and explore. Her current adventure? An escapade called letterboxing that involves ciphers, stamps, and more than a few trips to Mammoth Cave.

Sydney Friedman is a sophomore at Western Kentucky University majoring in Environmental, Sustainability, and Geographic Studies and minoring in Music. She plays oboe and percussion in several of the university's ensembles, including the Wind Ensemble, Symphony, Steel Band, and Big Red Marching Band. She hopes to someday work in the field of sustainability, possibly in waste management or city planning. Sydney has been studying literature throughout her education, including competing on a state champion English team in high school. She is grateful for the support of her English professor, Jess Folk, in creating her paper!

Henry Johnson learned to write in the suburbia of Fort Thomas Kentucky, where he also learned to breathe, and to live only being a short trip from Cincy. He left those hills behind for different ones and struck out for a new beginning. Henry is a Secondary Education English major at Western Kentucky University, which is a nice way of saying he will teach high school English. With a minor in creative writing and senior status, he is always being asked what he's writing. To that question, he responds: I am Henry M. Johnson; I wrote *The Child with Tourette's*.

Jessica Levine is a Creative Writing major and a Theatre minor. She is a senior with hopes of pursuing an MFA after graduation, and she serves as the WKU English Club's treasurer. Her cat Dusty is featured in Dr. Tom's short film, *You're Not Alone*.

Emma-Grace Manley is a senior from Lexington, KY. She is majoring in English for Secondary Teachers and is currently doing her CEPT II placement at Bowling Green High School. After graduating in December of 2024, Emma-Grace plans to enter the field of public education as an English teacher.

Alli Sadler is a junior Professional Writing major and Literature minor from Russellville, Kentucky. She is the daughter of Shawn Sadler and Jessica Maiden Sadler of Franklin, Kentucky. She currently works in the Writing Center as a tutor and serves as President of WKU's chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the International English Honor Society. When she's not traveling the world, she's skateboarding, listening to SHINee, and updating her Goodreads account. Looking ahead, she hopes to land a cushy office job and continue writing essays — her version of the American Dream.

Emma Tharpe is a sophomore majoring in Creative Writing and minoring in Legal Studies. She enjoys writing, reading, and watching movies, and she serves as the vice president of the English Club. She's a lifelong Star Wars fan and sugar addict, and in the future wants to become a lawyer while continuing her love of storytelling.

Cash Turner is a sophomore on the hill pursuing a degree in Middle Level Education in Social Studies and Language Arts. Through his college experiences, he has fallen in love with pens, poetry, history, and education! He hopes you find his love and appreciation to be evident in his writing.

Daniel Ungs received his Bachelor's degree in English with a concentration in Creative Writing in December of 2023. While at WKU, he developed a love and appreciation for experimental feminist cinema from the 1960's and enjoyed delving into the relationship between filmmaker and spectator within his writing. Additionally, during his time in college, Daniel was the recipient of several creative writing awards, including the Wanda Gatlin Essay Award in 2022 and the Dale Rigby Essay Award in 2023. He is from Danville, Kentucky.

Abigail Yarbrough (she/her) is a junior double majoring in Chinese with the Flagship program and English with a Creative Writing concentration. She is especially interested in translated literature and literary translation theory, with goals of becoming a Chinese-English translator. Special thanks to Dr. Marla Zubel for helping her prepare her paper to be presented at the Ted Hovet conference.

THE FICTIVE DREAM: HOW *THE SANDBOX* BREAKS THE RULES OF FICTION AND QUESTIONS REALITY

by Valerie Feldker

The Sandbox is a strange one-act play by Edward Albee with simple, flat characters and not much of a discernable plot. It does not seem to fit the traditional roles of story or the concept of maintaining the fictive dream. The fictive dream is an idea that comes from John Gardner. In his book, *On Becoming a Novelist*, he writes that authors should strive to create fiction that forms a dream-like reality for their audience, “the fictive dream or vision becoming more and more lucid, until reality, by comparison, seems cold, tedious, and dead” (Gardner 120). An author’s goal should be to maintain this fictive reality throughout their work. The idea is that audiences who remain in the fictive dream will thoroughly enjoy the work while audiences who are pulled out of the fictive dream and reminded of reality won’t. In many works of Absurdist Theater, including Edward Albee’s play *The Sandbox*, instead of working to maintain the fictive dream on stage, the fictive dream is purposefully and persistently broken. By breaking the fictive dream consistently, Albee flips the script, showing that reality on stage is boring, uneventful, and dead, while life in reality is wild and unpredictable. This act of purposefully breaking the fictive dream, whether through meta-aware characters, fourth-wall breaking dialogue, or direct references to the “outside” world, is used to blur

the line between fiction and reality and so force the audience to consider what makes up their reality.

The Sandbox is not a traditional story with a straightforward plot. The play starts with Mommy and Daddy entering the stage, with Daddy carrying Grandma, who is moaning and yelling. He places Grandma in the sandbox on stage then proceeds to go over and sit with Mommy. There is a Young Man in the back doing calisthenics. Mommy and Daddy sit and wait while the Musician plays some music. Grandma complains, throws some sand, and meets the Young Man. She talks with the Young Man about her life and about the Young Man and “the studio.” Then, there is an “off stage rumble” and Grandma hurries to half bury herself in the sand. Finally, the Young Man comes for Grandma and reveals that he is the Angel of Death. The play ends with Grandma congratulating the Young Man on his acting skills.

One of the main ways Edward Albee blurs the lines between the world on stage and the real world is through characters who are aware they are characters in a play. One of the first instances where we see this meta-character awareness is when Mommy speaks to the Musician. After Mommy and Daddy enter the stage, Mommy calls into the wings of the stage, “You! Out there! You can come in now” (Albee 1373) speaking to the Musician. What is interesting here is that Mommy is not only speaking to the Musician as a character, but she is also speaking to him as an actor, letting him know it is his cue to come on stage. When I was playing the role of Narrator in a production of *All I Really Need to Know I Learned by Being in a Bad Play*, by Werner Trieschmann, I had a similar line and role where I called for the Director to come on stage. The actor playing as the Director had to pretend to miss his cue. I had to pretend to repeat it and then proceed to go over to the wing and pull him out onto the stage. The purpose of this scene in my show was purely comedic, as the whole play was a comedy about being in a poorly put on production, but in *The Sandbox*, the scene serves an

additional purpose. It is an immediate calling to the real world, as Mommy's actor pretends to give an out-of-character cue to the Musician off stage. By doing this, Albee immediately tells his audience that this play does not intend to maintain the fictive dream. It is meant to be obscure, and it is meant to speak to the real world through the fictitious world on stage.

The Musician plays a curious role in this play, as it is questionable whether or not he is a character in the play or a person in real life. The Musician has no spoken lines; he only nods and plays his instrument. Usually, if a play were to include live music, the musician(s) would be hidden from the audience and the characters on stage. They would wear black and hide in the theater pit. The Musician in *The Sandbox* does not hide. He has a seat on stage in plain sight. In this way, he is more like a character than a person in real life. However, The Musician doesn't seem to have a role in the plot of the story. He seems to only be there for the music. He does not speak, and the only way he interacts with the characters is through a nod, starting his music, or stopping his music. In this way, he seems more like a person in real life, one the characters on stage are aware of. This is another ploy Albee uses to confuse the lines between reality and fiction. It allows the audience to question what makes a character and causes them to reflect on their own lives and the roles they play. In what ways do they act as characters following a script in their lives? In what ways do they take control?

Another way characters in *The Sandbox* constantly break the fictive dream is through references to the "outside" world. In one instance, there is a rumble off stage (as noted in the stage directions), and when Daddy asks, "what was that?" Mommy replies, "it was an off-stage rumble" (1376), referring to the noise by how it is written in the script, instead of giving it a fictitious name like a "roll of thunder." By doing this, Mommy steps out of the fictive world and shows she has knowledge of the real-world

script with actors and a stage. This could be another call to the audience's awareness. How much do they really know about the absurd world they live in? As Thomas Whitaker writes in his article "Holding Up the Mirror," a play "is a shared display of deception that can enact and expose the trickery, hypocrisy, self-deception, and psychological denial that largely constitute and control our society and ourselves" (703). In other words, audiences watching a play are participating, willingly, in a deception, and this deception, the play, can be used to bring to light the negative ways we deceive ourselves and others in reality. I think *The Sandbox* is playing off of this idea of deception. By purposefully referencing the "outside" world, the play reminds the audience that it is a deception, not to be enjoyed, but to be thought over. It is a commentary on the strangeness of reality. Jerry Solomon has something similar to say about the purpose of Albee's work. Solomon writes, "Albee wants that experience to become so meaningful that it has some kind of readily discernible effect on the thinking of his audience" (235). He agrees that Albee's work is designed to make the audience think. It is not just a show for the audience to sit back and enjoy. According to Solomon, the audience should leave the theater considering some sort of meaning. They may not know what the meaning is, but the fact is that they are thinking about it. Albee's shows force the audience to think.

Mommy is not the only character in *The Sandbox* who is aware of the "outside" world. The Young Man also knows he is a character in a fictitious world. When Grandma asks him what his name is, the Young Man responds, "I don't know" and later "I mean, they haven't given me one yet, the studio" (1375). This implies the Young Man knows he is a character, given a name not by his parents, but by the studio. Here, I think Albee might be blurring the lines between fiction and reality to comment on identity. In a show, as an actor, you take on the identity of the character given to you. In my production, I took on the identity of the Narrator, a stuffy self-righteous person that I am not. I took on

characteristics that I do not have in order to portray the character of the Narrator and make her come to life. In a way, she could not exist without me, and so part of her was also a reflection of me, even though she and I were quite different. Whitaker also talks about the inseparability of actor and character identity in all plays, even the most absurd ones. He writes that even the weird or boring characters in Beckett's absurdist plays that put "presumed identities radically in question" show "action of conscious or unconscious self-presentation" (702). Albee does the same thing. Even his weird, plain characters who do not seem to act like regular people reflect, in some way, an inner self. What self might Albee be presenting? I think he is presenting the meta concept of identity itself. In our lives, nothing is real until we give it a name. The Young Man does not have a name, so in a way, he is not real. He does not have a real role in the play until the end where his name is announced. When he says "I am the Angel of Death" (1378), he is no longer the strange young man who does calisthenics and says "hi." He becomes the Angel of Death. He has purpose. He has an identity.

In the end, Albee skillfully breaks the conventions of standard fiction to put on a show not simply for audience enjoyment, but for audience consideration. Usually, the desire of an author is to maintain the fictive dream so that the audience can thoroughly enjoy their work, but Albee strives for something more than enjoyment. Albee purposefully breaks the fictive dream to achieve the thoughtfulness he is looking for. Through meta-aware characters and multiple references to the outside world, Albee not only comments on the absurdity of life, he brings into question our concepts of reality. He challenges the audience to consider their role in life, how they go about it, and what makes up their identity. In his play, *The Sandbox*, Albee uses his characters to disrupt the fictive dream, speak to reality, and pose the question: what is reality anyway?

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THE MULTIFACETED MESSAGES OF NATURE: AN ECOCRITICAL ANALYSIS OF VICTOR LAVALLE'S *DESTROYER*

by Sydney Friedman

Where would humanity be without the natural environment? Many ecocritics assert that culture and society cannot exist independently of nature. The evolution of humanity has always been supported by natural processes, and the constructs of society could not be upheld without the environment's essential forces ("What is Ecocriticism"). The highly technological world of *Destroyer* is no exception to this, as the environment and the ideas of ecocriticism play crucial roles in the book's characterization and themes. Victor LaValle's graphic novel, *Destroyer*, is a modern expansion of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* taking place in a highly technological, dystopian future. The story follows Dr. Josephine Baker, a talented Black scientist who uses nanobots to revive her young son after he was killed in a police shooting. Victor Frankenstein's Creation is another notable character, adding chaos to the story and enhancing the themes. Throughout the story, many ecocritical issues are explored, such as interpretations of wilderness, human interactions with animals, roles of advanced technology, approaches to amending environmental issues, and women's connection to nature and treatment by society. Despite the technological advancements in *Destroyer*, the characters rely on nature to gain inspiration and comfort, and the technology often ends up doing more harm than

good. Society's mistreatment of women and animals is criticized while the necessity of the natural environment and its protection is emphasized by permeating themes of nature's influence on the characters' daily lives.

Of the many concepts within ecocriticism, wilderness is one of the most widely explored. Wilderness ecocriticism is used to analyze how humans view and interact with untouched nature. There are two main ideologies, which can both be found in *Destroyer*. The first, Old World, perceives wilderness as a wild and threatening realm where humans are in danger or a "place of exile" ("Ecocriticism"). The origin of the term wilderness even reflects this. Greg Garrard explains, "The word 'wilderness' derives from the Anglo-Saxon 'wildeoren,' where 'deoren' or beasts existed beyond the boundaries of cultivation" (Garrard, "Wilderness" 60). In *Destroyer*, it is quite common for Victor Frankenstein's Creation to be seen in wilderness. Chapter one opens with a full-page image of the Creature lounging atop an iceberg in Antarctica. He appears as if sitting on a throne, portraying his power and confidence while being in nature. This aligns with the Old World definition of wilderness, as the Creature may consider himself one of the 'beasts' that resides in the wild. His harshness is magnified by the frigid and wild landscape, allowing the reader to sense his beastly aggression and authority over the barren lands. Another event showcasing Old World wilderness occurs at the beginning of chapter two, where the Creature is seen hiking through the woods. He stumbles upon a group of men who clearly become startled by his presence. The Creature expresses his need for help as they shoot at him, exclaiming, "Come back, beast!" and "Come see what men can do!" (LaValle et al.). Clearly, their mentality reflects a perception of him as a 'beast,' as they become hostile before they can even fully see him. This appears to play into the Creature's perception of himself, because when the story skips back to the present, he is still in the wilderness, now wandering the deserts of Mexico and leaving destruction in his wake.

The second wilderness ideology, New World, is arguably even more prevalent in the graphic novel. This outlook believes wilderness to be a sanctuary that provides relaxation and clarity of mind (“Ecocriticism”). While it is possible that the Creature enjoys nature because he sees himself as a wild beast, he could also prefer a life in the wilderness due to the peacefulness it provides. This is only furthered by the Creature being practically exiled by the humans he tries to interact with. The incident in the woods was far from the only time the Creature received hostility or violence. In fact, William Cronon is quoted in Garrard’s “Wilderness,” stating “Wilderness is the natural, unfallen antithesis of an unnatural civilization that has lost its soul” (69). Though unfortunate, with how the Creature has been treated by society, a life in the wilderness appears to be his best option to live peacefully.

Despite being a brilliant scientist often residing in a lab filled with instruments, Dr. Baker seems to find particular solace in the wilderness. After her son, Akai, is horrifically killed, she chooses to live in a secluded cabin, surrounded by hills and a vast grassy landscape. Not only does this help her work on her inventions in solitude, but she also, similar to the Creature, can escape a society that is oppressive to her. In chapter three, Dr. Baker explains, “In all my years as a scientist, both in the lab and when I worked in universities, I’ve usually been treated in two ways. Either I’ve been invisible or I’ve been an angry Black woman. I can’t describe how frustrating this has been.” When agents Byron and Shelley sneak into her house, she feels the need to disclose her life story, just to avoid the possibility of them thinking she is “some mad Black woman who lost control” (LaValle et al.). These statements make it evident that Dr. Baker has experienced discrimination, especially working in the sciences, so it is possible that living in the wilderness allowed her to escape these issues and grieve her son without racist assumptions being placed on her. It is quite interesting how both Dr. Baker and the Creation share the desire

for wilderness, especially because they have many differences and engage in a fight to the death by the time the novel has ended. However, they both experience seclusion from mainstream society for their traits. This helps showcase a major theme of the novel, emphasizing how unfairly minorities, especially African Americans, are treated in America.

Animals are naturally intertwined with the concept of wilderness, but many descriptions of ecocriticism include little or no mention of animals. Despite this, in his article, "Theory from the fringes: Animals, Ecocriticism, Shakespeare," Simon C. Estok eloquently explained that because ecocriticism is rooted in environmental activism, animals and human farming of animals must be considered as a part of the health of the biosphere (63). *Destroyer* comments on these issues in chapter three, where the Creature has found his way to an industrial pig farm. The provided imagery, hundreds of pigs in tiny metal cages, is enough to evoke sorrow from any animal lover. However, as the Creature begins wrecking the building, and it becomes structurally unsound, the squealing and terrified expressions of the pigs elicit more sympathy, amplified by the fact that pigs are commonly known to be very intelligent creatures. While most readers may assume this part of the novel is simply an interlude as the Creature is moving across the country, the author uses it to convey a clear ecocritical message. Estok lays out ecocritical ethics regarding animals, including that people should defend animals and respect them. He quotes activist Cary Wolfe, who stated it is unethical "to systematically exploit and kill nonhuman animals simply because of their species." (Estok 66). Using this scene, LaValle et al. clearly condemns mistreatment of animals.

Animals also play an important role in chapter one of the novel, as the Creature spots some whales and jumps in the water to swim with them. This further conveys his love for wilderness, as he seems to enjoy the company of the whales. Sadly, his swim is

interrupted by the whales being harpooned. Both the mother whale and her calf are struck down, filling the water with blood and the Creature with rage. This scene helps to characterize the society in which the book takes place. According to Arne Kalland, whales are associated with purity and desirable, human-like qualities. As large and intelligent animals, they are “powerful symbol[s],” and large groups of people are expressing growing concerns for the ethics of whaling (124-125). For these reasons, the killing of the whales will easily resonate with most readers, especially once the whalers’ conversation displays a contrast between the emotionless impaling of the whales and one of the men’s concern for his sick dog. Using these methods, LaValle powerfully conveys that humans should not have such a lack of care for marine wildlife, which is an emerging concern of ecocritical advocates in recent times (“What is Ecocriticism”).

Destroyer also includes interesting messaging regarding the advancement of technology. Complex technology is essential to the daily lives of *Destroyer*’s characters, seeing as Dr. Baker is constantly developing groundbreaking inventions, and the workers of the lab use high-tech devices in almost everything they do. The observant reader will likely notice that “the lab” is actually part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, as the logo can be seen throughout the book above the directors desk. In chapter five, the logo and “NOAA” can be seen on Pliers’s car, confirming the affiliation. This is likely to surprise the reader, as the work done in the lab is not what would typically be expected of this administration. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s website mentions “cutting-edge research and high-tech instrumentation,” as well as “vessels, satellites, science centers, laboratories, and a vast pool of distinguished scientists and experts,” (“About Our Agency”). However, the NOAA of *Destroyer* does not seem to focus their research on the climate and ecosystems, but on creating life and immortality (“About Our

Agency”). For example, A biological 3D printer is being developed. It functions well, but the beings it creates quickly and grotesquely decompose. This exemplifies the unnaturalness of creating life in such a way, giving an impression that people should not try to control nor create life with these methods. In several sects of ecocriticism, urban life is demonized while agrarian lifestyles in rural areas are idealized. From this, one can assume that a highly technical life may also not be ideal in the eyes of some ecocritics (“Ecocriticism”). Furthermore, many ecocritics take interest and even astonishment at the natural systems of their own bodies, so experimenting with them would likely be looked down upon (Garrard, “Wilderness” 66-67).

In chapter five, discussions about the future of humans suggest that they will likely die out and be replaced by a mechanical generation. This has various implications. The fact that Dr. Baker could bring her son back to life is remarkable. However, one can also infer that power over life and death could cause corruption and harm, as most people would not take the level of care that Dr. Baker does. The lab’s director expresses her desire to discover a scientific means of immortality, stating, “We will be gods” (LaValle et al.). This, combined with the fact that the creations of the NOAA lab led to vast amounts of destruction, clearly displays that too much technological advancement and overcoming the natural forces of life could cause moral issues and harm from those desperate for power.

Ecocriticism has always had a political approach, aiming to challenge ideas of complacency towards environmental issues (Garrard, “Ecocriticism” 61). Ecocriticism was built upon various ideas of environmentalism and has “an entirely earth-centered approach” (“What is Ecocriticism”). The first wave of ecocriticism emphasized that humans should defend nature and that both the humanities and the sciences are responsible for attempting to solve environmental issues. The second wave expanded on these ideas,

reshaping the concept of the environment to encompass both natural landscapes and urban spaces and rethinking what defines human vs. nonhuman. The second wave contributed to the environmental justice movement, acknowledging the disproportionate effects environmental issues have on oppressed and underprivileged communities (“Ecocriticism”). Essentially, the second wave took a stronger focus on humans and their place within the environment (Garrard, “Ecocriticism” 62).

Interestingly, in chapter four, the director of the NOAA lab shares her thoughts on climate change, but she doesn’t seem to align with either wave much at all. She discusses her thoughts with Dr. Baker, stating,

They won’t stop [referring to the emissions of China and India]. And why should they? Even **we** don’t follow our own rules. The fate of humanity was decided a hundred years ago. It’s way too late for these little measures to make a difference. You and I are rational people, we both know it’s true (LaValle et al.).

She continues on to assert that humanity’s main purpose over time has been “cheap labor,” and that she and Dr. Baker should track down the Creation in order to discover the secret to his immortality. The director seems to have no care for the natural features that will be lost to climate change. Instead, she hopes to acquire immortality to become more powerful and outlive those who cannot escape the environmental damage. This does not really match up with NOAA’s stated mission “to conserve and manage coastal and marine ecosystems and resources” (“About Our Agency”). She doesn’t seem to care for any ecosystems, just for her own life and level of power. She doesn’t align with ecocriticism at all, appearing to have given up on preserving nature or humanity. There is always the possibility that she is correct about there being no hope left for humans, but the fact that none of the technology from her lab shown in the book is really geared towards fighting or

adapting to climate change is deeply ironic. With the amount of resources at her disposal, she is likely one of the few people in the world who could make a true substantial impact, and yet she chooses to focus on immortality instead.

However, just because the director has this viewpoint on climate change doesn't mean it aligns with the novel's message. One could argue that a theme of *Destroyer* is that advancements can be made, even if it seems too late. Akai is brutally murdered, and his mother is overcome with grief. However, she doesn't give up and is able to revive him. Then, at the end of the book, Dr. Baker is killed by the Creation, but her consciousness lives on because she had the foresight to download it into Akai. While these instances include the stretches of imagination that often come with sci-fi, it can reasonably be implied that if Dr. Baker can overcome her son's and her own death, then surely a lab with so much technology and many of her own inventions could be used to at least attempt to solve climate change issues. For these reasons, one can infer that LaValle is criticizing the director's behavior and does not agree with her standpoint on climate change. Combined with other messages of fighting against oppressive systems, this could likely encourage a reader to consider that fighting climate change is worthwhile.

Another crucial branch of ecocriticism is ecofeminism. This theory ponders the link between oppression of women and the environment, recognizing that land is often represented as feminine and is owned by men. Ecofeminists draw parallels between the dominance man has over women and nature ("What is Ecocriticism?"). Ecofeminism includes two ideological branches. The first, sometimes called radical ecofeminism, asserts that women intrinsically connect with nature on various levels, overturning the dominance of men over nature and women. The second branch, however, argues that no one gender is more connected to nature ("Ecocriticism?"). Another feature of

ecofeminism is recognizing that “modern science is largely dominated by men and this has, to a great extent, affected the natural childbirth process by the use of birth control and medicines” (“What is Ecocriticism”). An example of radical ecofeminism in chapter one of *Destroyer* is the fact that Dr. Baker displays a connection to nature through the comfort and peace she finds in gardening with her son and through seeking out a home in the wilderness. Ecofeminist ideals are also evident in Dr. Baker's motherhood. Obviously, her fertility is displayed in her pregnancy and her care for her garden, but she is also clearly nurturing to her son. This characterization is noteworthy as described in Yildiz Merve Öztürk's “An Overview of Ecofeminism: Women, Nature and Hierarchies,” in which “women can reproduce and create a life, just like nature ... they raise children and feed them.” Öztürk continues on to explain how women are often characterized as loving, selfless providers of fruitfulness (710). These ideas are portrayed interestingly in *Destroyer*. In chapter six, Dr. Baker becomes frustrated with how she is being perceived after finding that the director is dead. First she states that she wished to have killed the director herself. When her son asserts that she may not truly mean that, she goes on to exclaim:

You think I came here to **negotiate** with her? ... “If I was a man, my quest for vengeance would be considered heroic ... But I'm supposed to be **big enough to forgive?** I came here to lay waste to the lab. To murder the director and anyone who stood in my way. After that, I planned to cross this country, tearing down every foot soldier of the system that turned a blind eye to the death of my boy (LaValle et al.).

At first, it seems Dr. Baker is showing an aggressive nature rather than a nurturing one, but the reasoning for this is revealed to be grief for her son. She is still being motherly by fighting for her child and the injustice he received.

It is also noteworthy that Dr. Baker is a creator of things beyond just her son. She designs nanobots, and through using them on her son, she forms a new, mechanical species, which she acknowledges in chapter five will likely have great influence on the future. In some ways, she is the ultimate mother, creating new forms of life while still nurturing her natural born son. She also experiences the effects of ecofeminist ideals through how she is treated, particularly by the director, when she becomes pregnant. Öztürk explains how “Women are pushed to live a domestic life and become passive due to their fertility” (707). One could argue that the director began to perceive Dr. Baker in this way when learning of her pregnancy. She explains this in chapter three, stating “When I became pregnant, I was let go. **Phased out.** I think the director took it personally somehow. Someone else was more important to me than the lab” (LaValle et al.). Despite Dr. Baker being described as a genius who created most of the technology used in the lab, she lost her image when also becoming a caring mother.

With many of the issues discussed in *Destroyer*, it is left up to the reader to decide their opinion based on the events of the story. However, ecocritical theory helps to reveal some major environmental themes. *Destroyer* portrays the importance of wilderness to both the Creation and Dr. Baker, who find comfort in residing there. It criticizes how animals are treated and displays issues with such a technically advanced society. *Destroyer* encourages its reader to consider what really should be done about environmental issues, and it explores treatment of women through displaying ideas of ecofeminism in relation to Dr. Baker. *Destroyer* covers many issues beyond environmental concerns, yet it still sends strong ecocritical messages while remaining emotional and engaging. Although *Destroyer* is fiction, any reader is sure to apply its concepts to their real world surroundings. This compelling story truly conveys, among many things, that society and nature will always be intertwined. No matter how far technology develops, no

matter how jaded people become, the environment will always be the crucial backbone to humanity.

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THE PASSION PLAY

by Jessica Levine

“...and if we ever forget their names, if we ever forget the wind in that hallway, if we ever forget what they did, (...) then we are fools who have allowed memory to be murdered too, and what good are we then?”

– Brian Doyle, “Dawn and Mary”

In 2010, two years before the Sandy Hook Elementary shooting and ten years after the Columbine shooting, my school resource officer came to my freshman drama class to offer us our first acting gig. In a couple days, the White House, Tennessee Police Department would be using Heritage High School’s new campus to practice responding to an active shooter. With the ribbon freshly cut, Class of ‘14 would be the first to start and finish within Heritage High’s walls. We were proud of that, and proud of our new building. It was like a castle with its gaping “Commons Area” and its grand staircase and the air of fantasy and fairytale that had swirled around the blueprints and construction models on display in the old building. I wasn’t yet thinking of how the police department didn’t have any experience running drills in here. I wasn’t thinking of Columbine or any more recent shootings. I was thinking of how curious the cops must be to see how the three-year project turned out, and how exciting it would be to pop out and scare them.

As far as the officers knew, it was going to be a typical after-hours drill. Just them, the trainer, and two assailants shooting blanks. Our participation was top-secret. We could tell as many other people as we thought would come, but we couldn't post about it or tell any officers we knew. It was a small town. I took Judo at Vanetta's Dojo where most of the cops took their defense training. A couple of them were senseis in the kids' classes. My dad took the adult class with them—on the same night, across the same mat, in the same gi. And God, I was *incensed* when he dropped me off at the drill and the trainer guy invited him to join. They cast him as a teacher held hostage in the library. When the cops burst in, he'd run out towards them with the second wave of volunteers, dragging a bleeding student with him. Here I am, psyched to even be an extra, and somehow my dad stumbles into a leading role? It's not like he was bursting with untapped talent—he was just there. Only two other adults had showed. Sandy Hook wouldn't happen until December 2012. *The Sun Magazine* wouldn't print Brian Doyle's "Dawn and Mary" until August 2013. But even before Dawn Hochsprung and Mary Sherlach's smiling photos shone into their dark living rooms, none of the Heritage teachers wanted to stand with their students and watch the gun go off.

Megan Baxter, a teacher in New Hampshire, details her attempt to teach another Doyle essay in "On Teaching Brian Doyle's 'Leap' to Students Born After 9/11." Her lesson is on "collective memory" and "writing from the plural." She thought she could depend on 9/11 as an event that everyone has a clear memory of, only to realize that most of her students weren't even alive for it. While Doyle does avoid the singular "I" that Baxter was steering her students away from, his dependence on collective memory in "Leap" and "Dawn and Mary" anchor the essays to a specific audience—those with living memories of the events. This is not to say that the essays are not effective in keeping those memories alive for later generations, but nothing is truly timeless.

We may still be moved by great writing about the tragedy of Pompeii, but not as easily as by great writing about Hurricane Katrina.

Consider how vague Doyle keeps his opening line in “Dawn and Mary:” “Early one morning several teachers and staffers at a Connecticut grade school were in a meeting.” Doyle doesn’t give us a date or a school name. The implication is that we already know that this is December 14, 2012, at Sandy Hook Elementary moments before the shooter began his tirade. *The Sun Magazine* printed “Dawn and Mary” in August of 2013, eight months after the shooting. The trust that Doyle had in his 2013 readers was not misplaced. Dawn Hochsprung and Mary Sherlach still weighed heavily on the American mind. But ten years later, Americans reading the first line of a piece like this will think, *which one?*

Connecticut gives us a clue. Sandy Hook is still the most famous Connecticut shooting, though there have been nearly two dozen others. *The Washington Post* counted 386 school shootings in the United States since Columbine in 1999. As of 2023, Sandy Hook falls almost perfectly at the halfway mark—just as far from the debatable “start” as it is from the temporary present. “Grade school,” horrific as it is, doesn’t narrow down the other 198 grade school incidents. “Connecticut grade school” does, but for how much longer? If the next twenty years come with another 300 school shootings, no one can be expected to remember them all.

For the drill, we were told to wear throwaway clothes—clothes we didn’t care to ruin in case they got fake blood on them. I was so jealous of the kids picked to play dead. The volunteer makeup artist put latex bullet holes on their faces and chests, and she gave them t-shirts in pale colors so the fake blood would really pop. A few of the head-wound actors got paired with panic actors. They would lie with their face-craters in full view while their panic-buddy pulled at them and screamed at the cops, *My friend is dying! Please help me! Help me!* Those wounded on the stomach or limbs were to clutch at their

latex—carefully, you don’t want to ruin the shape—and wail. Bonus points for crying, if anyone knew how. Our job, we were told, was to make it as hard as possible for the officers to keep moving. They were not to stop until they found both shooters.

I raised my hand and asked if I could call the cops from my Judo class by name. The trainer or coordinator or whoever he was—I was still mad at him for letting my dad join—was thrilled by the question. *Absolutely*, he said. *You guys see an officer you know? You look him in the eyes and scream his name. You reach at him and boller “don’t leave me.” You beg him not to let you die.*

I don’t believe Doyle was confident that Sandy Hook would be the last of its kind. I don’t believe he wrote that first sentence thinking that it would always be that easily recognizable. There had already been 12 years of school shootings before Doyle sat down to write “Dawn and Mary,” and he couldn’t have been optimistic enough to not see the next 12 years of them coming. He calls us not to forget Dawn and Mary’s names or the humanity that drove them to defend their students, warning us that if we do, we will be “fools who have allowed memory to be murdered too.”

And haven’t we done just that? I didn’t recognize Dawn and Mary’s names when I read Doyle’s essay. I might have in 2013, but before reading Doyle’s piece, my 2023 mind could only recall them as “the principal” and “the school counselor” who died heroically in “one of the shootings.” What they did, how they died, who they were, and which shooting they belonged to had been lost to me. Lost to time. Lost among the other 386 U.S. school shootings. It’s not enough that they all occurred in my lifetime. There are simply too many. NBC counted 169 deaths out of the 386 shootings. Shootings that have become unremarkable and expected. We dread them, but they do not surprise us. If you’re watching a movie and a character sees a school shooting on the news, it doesn’t date the scene. Not the way airport security dates a scene as before or after 9/11. Not the way matching a mask to an outfit dates a scene

during Covid-19. There is no “after” to any of the 386 school shootings since 1999. It’s just “386 and counting.” And that was only the tally in 2022; there have already been 29 more shootings in 2023 resulting in 15 more deaths. One hundred eighty-four names with Dawn and Mary wedged somewhere in the middle of the list. Someday, barring a miraculous change in legislation, they’ll be buried at the bottom.

I covered my ears in the minutes before the guy playing the hallway assailant shot the blanks. I told my friends I was worried the noise would hurt my ears, and that was mostly true. I knew it was all fake. I knew everyone was acting. But some inexplicable chill was creeping over my skin, stiffening the muscles in my chest. I watched the gun—the gun filled with blanks—and thought of my dad’s rifle. From a distance, it looked identical. My Flushing, Queens father had no clue what to do with a rifle, other than pose with it for Facebook pictures and carry it around unloaded whenever White House had a break-in. He didn’t have a locked case for it—just a spot on his closet floor under a pile of old coats. I tripped over it more than once looking for an extra quilt. It hadn’t been cleaned or fired in fifteen years. *God forbid you ever need it, my mom would tease, cause that thing’ll blow up in your hands.*

This gun in the hallway—it was pretty much the same, right? A harmless prop? When was the last time it was cleaned? The library door was down the hall, past the shooter, and just out of sight. I thought of my dad soaked with blood—fake blood—from his bleeding—fake bleeding—student. I thought of how grouchy I’d been at his excitement to volunteer, and I reminded myself that the bullet wounds were all latex.

When the rifle went off, all the air I’d been holding broke out of me in a rattling screech. I felt it scrape my throat as it left me, but my voice drowned in the thunder and crash of vocal cords and tennis shoes. *No running down the stairs, the trainer had told us. It can be real enough without real injuries.* But we ran. “Something in us

beyond sense and reason,” had been startled awake by those shots, and we ran. It wasn’t what we were told to do, and it wasn’t what we’d been trained to do. But “every fiber of [our] bodies — bodies descended from millions of years of bodies that had leapt away from danger—” roared for us to run. The roar was as blaring in us as it must have been in Dawn Hochsprung and Mary Sherlach, and louder still as they “snarled at death” and ran, roaring right back, to defend children—to defend us.

Whatever was roaring in the cops that night, they did just as they were told, just as they were trained, and stalked up the grand staircase in quick, deliberate steps as we avalanched upon them. Their faces were as rigid and gray as corpses. The ones I knew looked like no one I’d ever met.

After my dad came outside with the second wave, after the hallway assailant and the library assailant were both cuffed and all the injury and panic actors were peeling off their latex, I flung the rest of my adrenaline at my Judo senseis. *Did we fool you? Did you see it coming? It was like-real, huh?* An ambulance and firetruck were parked out front where mingling parents waited to pick up their actors. The trainer guy broke up the chat, reminding everyone the drill was still active. He told the injury actors to put their gunshots back on and let the first responders treat them. I saw a dad help his teen readjust a chest wound just before an EMT rushed over and said, *Sir, take your shirt off. I need it to stop the bleeding.* He looked down at his white tee, over at his bloodied kid, then back at the EMT and asked, *Is that gonna wash out?*

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PARADISE LOST: UNVEILING THE HIERARCHY OF KNOWLEDGE AND EVE'S QUEST FOR WISDOM

by Emma-Grace Manley

Paradise Lost by John Milton uses the story of Genesis to comment on ideologies of modern Christianity through the characterization of Eve and her experience in Eden that leads up to the fall of humanity, demonstrating the significance of the epic for modern-day readers. In Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the theme of knowledge acquisition resonates across the spheres of religion, the divine and worldly. Eve's exclusion from divine wisdom, and subsequent quest for equality, sets the stage for a cautionary tale, demonstrating the consequences of exclusion and the pursuit of worldly knowledge in the absence of divine guidance. This narrative not only serves as a commentary on the Biblical stigma against knowledge but also reflects Milton's personal questioning of the Genesis story. Who, Milton asks, is responsible for the fall of men—Is it Eve's innate sin or the exclusion she experienced in her quest for knowledge and understanding?

Paradise Lost illustrates Eve's inferiority to Adam from the very beginning of her creation, primarily through her exclusion from the divine knowledge that God shares with Adam. This concept is illustrated in the characterization of Adam and Eve. They are first described as a unit, "And worthy seemed, for in their looks divine/
The image of their glorious maker shown/ Truth, wisdom, sanctitude severe and pure" (4.291-293). To start, it appears they

are contextualized as equals, yet in the next few lines, Milton begins to write about their differences. Adam is characterized as courageous and Eve as sweet and graceful. Immediately after this depiction between the two, their difference is described, “He for God only, She for God in Him” (4.299). In the earliest description of Adam and Eve, Eve is immediately painted as inferior to Adam within their spirituality. Adam has God in him, while Eve receives God through Adam.

At the start, Eve tries to accept her subservient role. She demonstrates her effort by saying,

O thou for whom
 And from whom I was formed, flesh of thy flesh,
 And without whom am to no end, my guide
 And head! What thou hast said is just and right.
 (4.440–443)

Her formation was not only to be a companion for Adam but she was made from a piece of him, illustrating that without Adam, Eve would not exist. In her understanding of this fact, she trusts Adam’s decision making as the moral guide for both of them. Eve’s entrance into Eden was as Adam’s companion, but what we learned later was that her subservience to Adam would mean that she did not receive the gift of divine wisdom like Adam did. Milton scholar Elisabeth Liebert emphasizes this idea in saying,

Higher knowledge is the prerogative of males: God is male and the angels are referred to individually by the masculine third person pronoun. When God sends Raphael to warn Adam and Eve of their perilous situation, Raphael is instructed to ‘converse with Adam,’ while Eve remains a silent spectator to the ensuing conversation. (Liebert 156)

The significance of this relates to the Biblical ideology that not only are men the head of the home, but they should be trusted with all decisions due to their “divine wisdom” much like what Adam possesses. This Biblical ideology is showcased in Timothy 2:12

when it reads, “I do not permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.” Milton takes this Biblical view and uses it in his portrayal of Eve in *Paradise Lost* as, although a companion to Adam, an outsider to the divine wisdom that God places in Adam. This exclusion leads to Eve’s vulnerability to the temptation of Satan, which is why she was his chosen target.

In *Paradise Lost*, Eve’s exclusion from the divine wisdom that Adam is permitted serves as a driving factor in her susceptibility to Satan’s deception. Eve’s awareness of this inferiority does not appear a problem initially, in fact it is an idea that she endorses. However, through her search for a sense of self, she begins to yearn for the knowledge that she does not have. Beginning at Eve’s very entrance into Eden, her earliest curiosity is found within her sense of self. She wakes and admires her reflection in the water before being interrupted by a divine voice, God, telling her to be with Adam. Her initial rejection of Adam signifies how his presence has disrupted her self-harmony, which is why she wants to return to her reflection, where she had her highest sense of self. By asking her to relinquish her own image and become Adam’s, her understanding of her identity is halted.

Eve then tries to find her sense of self within Adam, clarifying her endorsement of Adam’s superiority. Liebert asserts that after Eve’s creation, “she does not wake and postulate from her own existence or the existence of a creator but discovers instead the existence of an image, an other, and realizes that this other is necessary to complete her own existence, her sense of self” (Liebert 155). When pulled away from her own identity, she finds her “purpose” in Eden as Adam’s companion. Upon this she says,

Whose image though art; him thou shalt enjoy
 Insperably thine, to him shalt bear
 Multitudes like thyself, and thence be called

Mother of human race (4.472-475).

Eve finds later that she is not fully satisfied with just being a part of Adam, it is not fulfilling of her identity, and she seeks more; to have what Adam does. She finds that, “it is access to received knowledge of spiritual reality that delineates the subtle but unbridgeable difference between the superior man and the inferior woman, and knowledge that—Eve hopes— will grant her equality with Adam” (Liebert 157). Meaning that she deciphers the major difference between her and Adam being divine knowledge, and because of this she seeks out worldly knowledge from the forbidden tree in hopes that it will remedy the inferiority that led to her exclusion.

Scholars often debate how or why Eve believes that the Tree of Knowledge will fill this void she is wanting to be rid of. It can be inferred that she sees Adam’s sense of self being found through his connection with God and that is not the same for her. Liebert concedes that Eve is

denied the opportunity in the moments after her creation to pursue self-knowledge and is consistently denied unmediated access to spiritual realities, and yet, as is evident in her changing discourse as she adjusts the mode of her address to Adam, she is already identifying knowledge and its dissemination as a powerful tool in the creation and dissolution of hierarchy. (Liebert 162)

In simpler terms, because of her exclusion from the relationship that God and Adam have, she begins to see that knowledge is an instrument in the development of the hierarchy between her and Adam. As she developed awareness of this principle, she gained a higher vulnerability to the actions of Satan. In her, Satan saw this quest for more and he used it against her when he said,

What fear I then, rather what know to fear
Under this ignorance of good and evil,
Of God or death, of law or penalty?

Here grows the cure of all, this fruit divine,
 Fair to the eye, inviting to the taste,
 Of virtue to make wise: what hinders then
 To reach, and feed at once both body and mind?
 (9.773-779)

Satan's understanding of the exclusion Eve was feeling hangs upon his own power struggles with God that led to his leaving Heaven. Because he knew exactly what Eve was thinking, he was able to make his persuasion more effective. The use of the words "cure of all" and "to make wise" hit home for Eve, to make her as wise as Adam and curing the inferiority between the two of them made eating the fruit appealing. The significance of this lies in the idea that if Eve was not excluded from God and Adam's direct connection and in turn divine wisdom, Satan would not have been able to convince her to eat the fruit because the internal struggle she was facing would not exist.

In *Paradise Lost*, Satan draws upon Eve's weak point of being inferior in mind to Adam and uses that to convince her to eat from the tree that symbolizes worldly knowledge. It is important to discern the difference between the divine knowledge that God shares with Adam and the worldly knowledge that Eve gains in eating from the forbidden tree. A subsequent epic poem by Milton entitled *Paradise Regained* aids in this discernment when it reads, "The first and the wisest of them all professed to know this only, that he nothing knew" (4, 1.293). This quote establishes the ideology that those that are wise are the ones who actually know nothing, drawing upon the biblical reference that worldly knowledge is not equivalent to divine wisdom from God. In simpler terms, acquisition of knowledge does not make you biblically wise. Ecclesiastes 1:16 and 18 give us The Bible's stance on this, "Life without God is vain or empty, the accumulation of knowledge or facts does not enrich one's soul... For with much

wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief.” This biblical ideology directly correlates to the exclusion of Eve in *Paradise Lost* and in turn her role in the fall. Eve accumulates some knowledge and facts from her lived experience in Eden, still longing for the wisdom that Adam has, but her eating from the tree went against God’s ideals as stated in the biblical quote, in turn leading to sorrow without resolution to her problem (the fall). Acquiring the knowledge of good and evil from the tree did not in fact make her equal with Adam, in order for that to happen her intentions would have had to be different. The idea of divine wisdom goes further than just being rich in knowledge; Katherine Fletcher noted that “In itself knowledge does not make up the highest perfection but must lead to love and the imitation of God” (Fletcher 118). Meaning that because of the biblical ideology that God’s wisdom is the highest attainable, in *Paradise Lost*, Eve could not just acquire equality to Adam by eating from the forbidden tree, in that she denied the very biblical principle that higher knowledge comes from the emulation of knowing God, which she was denied.

Paradise Lost’s utilization of the biblical discouragement surrounding knowledge that does not come from God illustrates the ways in which this discouragement can affect religion for modern readers. Many pieces of Christianity are dependent upon blind trust in God, religious figures drawing upon biblical references to enforce the accuracy of this idea. An example of this can be drawn from common experiences of those that believe in the Christian faith, when something terrible happens in their lives and they question the why behind it, the religious figures they are seeking comfort from will tell them to trust “God’s plan” and that everything happens for a reason. The problem with this stance is that we, as humans, are innately curious. Additionally, when we are told to simply trust in something we cannot see, as if that should make the terrible things better, this innate curiosity is often spiked. It is in times like this, when innate curiosity becomes stronger, that

many believers then begin to question the legitimacy of their religion. This same questioning and curiosity can be found in *Paradise Lost* through Adam and Eve. Jordan Pace, in his writing about subversive theology, argues “they were programmed by none other than God to experience feelings of self-worth and curiosity” (Pace 6). Eve’s own innate curiosity is shut down at the very beginning of her creation when Adam says,

being I lent

Out of my side to thee, nearest my heart

Substantial Life, to have the by my side

Henceforth an individual solace dear;

Part of my Soul I seek thee, and thee claim

My other half (4.483-488).

Contextually, Eve has just been pulled away from her own reflection by God’s voice to be with Adam, and initially rejects Adam, preferring her own reflection. Adam’s demand here for Eve to join him because she was made from him immediately rips away her initial curiosity of her self-identity. Eve tries to accept the role placed on her and joins Adam, but as time goes on her curiosity is continually shut down through her exclusion from Adam’s relationship with God. Due to this, Eve begins to question her inferiority and wonder about how she can become equal, leading to her eating from the Tree of Knowledge.

Furthermore, Eve’s trust in the divine voices of God and Adam that pull her away from her reflection emulates the blind trust in God that is present within the modern-day form of Christianity. To expand on the ramifications of Eve’s listening to the demands, Pace suggests that “implicit, childlike trust led each directly to his or her ultimate demise, for instead of welcoming his creations back into the fold, God sentenced them to an eternity of agony and exclusion” (Pace 6). This is a parallel to our own modern religious struggles and innate curiosity. Young children,

adolescents, and adults immersed in Christianity often wonder about the legitimacy of God. There are endless reasons behind this questioning, including believing in something they cannot see, lived circumstances, or poor religious experiences (Cooper et al.). This questioning is shut down and the idea of blind trust is activated. Then comes the introduction of atonement, paying for our sins, which yet again harnesses one's innate curiosity and in turn can cause a further wonder about the legitimacy of religious teachings. *Paradise Lost's* portrayal of hindering Eve's curiosity by initiating a blind trust illustrates that, in the epic and our own lives, stifling one's ability to wonder can lead to a rejection of religious ideals and taking one's life into their own governance rather than eliminating doubt all together.

Further developing this notion, it is important to acknowledge that the idea of eating from the Tree of Knowledge stems directly from a sense of innocent curiosity on the behalf of Adam and Eve. Similarly, to the suppression of Eve's self-curiosity, when they wonder about the forbidden tree, there is no concrete answer given by God, instead they are threatened with the consequence of death. Not only does this stifling of their wonder push them to rebel, but the understanding of the consequence is also not there. God's response to curiosity with threatening punishment is similar to a parent telling their child not to do something or there will be consequences, and when the child asks why, rather than giving them a reason just saying, "because I said so." The child's sense of curiosity is heightened, and they might disobey instructions purely to find out the "why". That is what God did here with Adam and Eve. Furthermore, the use of death as the consequence for eating from the Tree of Knowledge is not effective. Adam, and by association Eve, says,

This one, this easy charge, of all the trees
 In Paradise that bear delicious fruit
 So various, not to taste that only Tree

Of Knowledge, planted by the Tree of Life,
 So near grows death to life, whate'er death is,
 Some dreadful thing no doubt; for well thou know'st
 God hath pronounced it death to taste that Tree (4.421-
 427).

This reveals that Adam and Eve's innocence prevents them from fully comprehending the idea of death, it is abstract to them. As a result, God's use of this possible consequence does not have the intended effect because the gravity of it is not understood.

It is in this notion that the idea, once again, of harnessing curiosity rather than acknowledging it causes further questioning rather than facilitating the intended blind trust. The parallel of this in modern Christianity is reflected in the very principles of the religion, that sin and the disobeying of God leads to an eternity in Hell. Much like Adam and Eve's inability to understand death as a consequence, as humans, Hell is just as abstract to us as this idea was to them. Seeing as we have no frame of reference for Hell as a consequence, it does not always have the intended effect of discouraging us from acting in non-divine ways. This aspect of *Paradise Lost* connects to modern Christianity's disjunction.

In analyzing the idea that Eve's seeking of worldly knowledge is undivine, it is prevalent to discuss Milton's own purpose for the writing of *Paradise Lost* and what that means for the reading of the epic. It is Pace's assertion that "because he could not directly reconcile the Biblical narrative with his understanding of modern natural science, Milton created a story that borrows from both, but ultimately leaves interpretation to the reader" (Pace 18). Milton was someone who sought out knowledge, and not just biblical knowledge but that of the world around him. Because of this, it is possible that he had questions about the biblical stance that Godly wisdom is the only fruitful knowledge and strove to make a literary comment on it through Eve's character. Milton did not live in a

state of exclusion in the way Eve did, as a white man he had the ability to elevate worldly knowledge to that of divine realms. Concurrently, *Paradise Lost*, read as an implicit argument for self-identity and individuality, suggests that Milton, a known advocate for individual rights, is using Eve's situation to comment on his own stances, including the harmonious integration of Christian principles with pursuit of higher knowledge. For instance, *Paradise Lost* illustrating a hierarchy that is determined by possessing wisdom could be Milton's suggestion that, "tyranny could be derived from the unfair distribution of knowledge—in which God is at the top of the hierarchy" (Pace vii). Meaning that this story is Milton's way of talking about knowledge as power, arguing against the biblical ideology that knowledge is only fruitful when it comes from God.

The story of Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost* thrusts into perspective the idea that excluding the curious can lead to a susceptibility for deception, in turn negating the purpose of the initial exclusion. Eve is excluded from the relationship God and Adam have due to her spirituality being found in Adam and his found in God. This contributes then to a sense of inferiority regarding Eve, and in longing for the divine wisdom Adam possesses, she eats from the Tree of Knowledge, gaining worldly knowledge that is not equivalent to that of the divine, thus the fall of humanity. Additionally, the notion of shutting down innate curiosity, as God does with Eve, translates to ideals present in modern Christianity that discourage one from being curious, instead opting for blind trust. This portion of Christianity, as shown in through the fall *Paradise Lost*, only leads to rebellion or the intensifying of questioning one's religion. John Milton, an individual rights activist, writes the epic with the intention of allowing the reader to make their own inferences on what he is arguing, while making a statement on the importance of individuality. Many lenses can be applied to the study of *Paradise Lost* to allow for interpretations like this, in turn making the

analysis of Eve's exclusion, Christian statements on knowledge acquisition, and a critique upon the handling of innate curiosity a reflection of Milton's very purpose in writing this text.

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QUEERING HERSELF: A REPARATIVE READING OF EVE IN *PARADISE LOST*

by *Alli Sadler*

Dr. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, literary critic and essential contributor to the field of queer studies, once argued for the reading of classic texts “in terms of their empowering, productive as well as renewing potential to promote semantic innovation, personal healing and social change” (Röder 58-59). Since establishing this reparative framework for the critical analysis of more “problematic” texts, queer interpretations of classic literature have become more and more prevalent; rather than interrogating the texts' complex (and often disparaging) perspectives on matters such as queerness, readers instead search within them for comfort and belonging. In John Milton's English epic, *Paradise Lost*, gender and sexuality often present themselves as the subject of contentious debate; at the same time, queer audiences have been able to identify with Milton's depictions of angelic sexuality. While queer interpretations of *Paradise Lost* have become more common in recent years, many of these perspectives focus on the sexualities of male angels, or even of the human Adam. However, Eve is rarely considered in terms of queerness, perhaps due to Milton's decidedly misogynistic (yet biblically accurate) characterization or seventeenth-century England's intentional erasure of sapphic identities in literature (Craft-Fairchild 409-410). Though she drives the plot forward, Eve is not a fully realized character; aspects such as her personality and

identity remain superfluous to the overarching narrative of *Paradise Lost*.

To queer Eve in this context, we must direct our attention to Eve's relationship with herself – a relationship that can be described as a sapphic love directed inward. Eve's queerness is apparent from her introduction in Book Four; the “mirror story” that she relays to Adam describes her initial attraction to herself in a manner that implies sexual and romantic feelings toward her own femininity. This queerness is further substantiated by Eve's initial perception of Adam, whom she regards as “less fair” (4.478). Her queer identity is likewise evidenced by the language Adam uses to describe her, which suggests that he recognizes Eve's sexuality outside of their heterosexual relations. Eve is made queer, not only through the interpretation of a contemporary audience, but also by her own actions; this act of self-queering recontextualizes Eve's role in *Paradise Lost*, elevating her character from mere temptress to a more nuanced portrayal of sapphism. Beyond the reparation of her character, however, the notion of a sapphic Eve unravels a broader dialogue concerning how the act of queering can be used to resist identity-based oppression.

Eve's queerness presents itself at the beginning of her narrative; her first queer experience is looking upon her reflection in the pond (referred to as the “mirror story”). Eve recounts this experience to Adam in Book Four, stating:

A shape within the wat'ry gleam appeared,
 Bending to look on me: I started back,
 It started back; but pleased I soon returned,
 Pleased it returned as soon with answering looks
 Of sympathy and love (461-465).

The language Eve uses to describe this event is revealing; take the word “pleased,” for example. The notion that Eve experiences pleasure from the mere sight of herself suggests an almost

masturbatory element to this initial moment of self-perception. While not explicitly stated by the author, the reader can interpret Eve's pleasure as being of a sapphic nature. This is a concept explored by Lara Dodds in her essay, "Virtual or Immediate Touch: Queer Adaptations of *Paradise Lost* in Science Fiction and Fantasy." Dodds argues that readers are able to identify queerness within *Paradise Lost* using their preexisting understanding of sex and sexuality. She states, "Presumption has shaped our understanding of sexuality in *Paradise Lost* in a way that has been productive of queer interpretation and queer adaptation" (154). Though Milton may not have intended for Eve's words to be interpreted as such, we may presume that Eve's use of "pleased" indicates sexual pleasure; therefore, Eve's encounter with her reflection gains a sexual connotation. I argue, then, that her attraction to femininity implies queerness; however, rather than experiencing same-sex attraction to another woman, Eve's sapphic feelings are directed inward. Eve's queerness is embedded within the text; readers do not have to search for explicit statements regarding Eve's romantic or sexual orientation, but rather, they can make logical inferences about her identity utilizing the subtleties of Milton's language. This serves to strengthen arguments for queerness within *Paradise Lost*.

Beyond pleasure, Eve also experiences a decidedly queer desire for herself, as illustrated by her language in Book Four. In the lines immediately following her mirror story, Eve says of her reflection: "There I had fixed / Mine eyes till now, and pined with vain desire" (4.465-466). The words "pined" and "desire" are typically evocative of romantic and sexual circumstances. Eve's language in this scene seems to imply that she yearns for herself in a non-platonic manner. This is further evidenced by the fact that, in this scene, Eve is yet unaware of what a reflection is; God explains to Eve, "What thou seest, / What there thou seest, fair creature, is thyself; / With thee it came and goes" (4.467-469). Eve's desire for herself is inherently sensual, evoking strong feelings of both "love" and physical attraction in her; for example, she cannot take her eyes

off of herself (4.465-466). However, while it is important to investigate Eve's feelings toward her femininity, it is also crucial to examine her feelings for Adam. Though she recognizes him as her ordained partner, Eve's sexual attraction to Adam is not as apparent as her attraction to herself.

Eve's interactions with Adam throughout *Paradise Lost* imply that the male form arouses her less than her own female form; the language she uses when describing her first impression of Adam is particularly telling. Eve recounts in Book Four that she initially turned away from her male counterpart, stating:

Till I espied thee, fair indeed and tall,
Under a platane; yet methought less fair,
Less winning soft, less amiably mild,

Than that smooth wat'ry image: back I turned (477-480).

Eve describes Adam as “less fair, / Less winning soft, less amiably mild”; when comparing this language to the language she uses to describe herself, it becomes apparent that Eve prefers her appearance to that of male Adam's. While she pines with “vain desire” (4.466) for herself, she says nothing of note regarding Adam's appearance, other than that he is less attractive than herself. Eve then goes on to state that, though she is beautiful, her beauty is “excelled by manly grace, / And wisdom, which alone is truly fair” (4.490-491). Eve does not refer to Adam's appearance or make known any sexual attraction to him; she speaks solely of traits he possesses, such as “wisdom” and “manly grace.” This scene establishes that the attraction between the pair is unequal, if reciprocal at all; Eve's preferences seem to lean heavily toward the female form, and since she is the only woman in the Garden of Eden, it then follows that she must be attracted to her own figure. Eve's queerness is not relevant only to the modern reader, however; her queer identity also informs her relationship with Adam and his understanding of female sexuality.

When constructing Eve's queer identity, it is important to explore Adam's perception of her sexuality; Adam's language signals that Eve's queerness is visible not only to a contemporary audience, but characters within the narrative, as well. When Adam describes Eve to the angel Raphael in Book Eight of *Paradise Lost*, he relays that he is overwhelmed by her beauty, stating:

yet when I approach
 Her loveliness, so absolute she seems
 And in her self complete, so well to know
 Her own, that what she wills to do or say,
 Seems wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best (546-550).

Adam's use of the words “absolute” and “complete” suggests that he understands that Eve does not rely on him to form her sexual identity; her sexuality (and overall identity) is something that she alone has access to. Through Adam's conception of Eve, her character is expanded beyond utility to the plot of *Paradise Lost*; she gains a queer identity that relies on reader interpretation and presumption. Though Milton obfuscates the nature of Eve's identity, we may use this to our advantage when constructing queer interpretations of her character. Lara Dodds explains, “Milton's text strategically reveals—and withholds—information that we want to have” (159). Though the audience seeks to understand Eve's sexuality in more concrete terms, the subtle nature of her depiction lends itself to queer interpretation; by working in the spaces left by this vagueness, we are able to identify her queerness and implement it in our interpretations of the epic.

By design, the biblical Eve is a two-dimensional character that exists to serve as an explanation for humanity's fallen state. It is painfully simple to characterize Eve's ignorance as malice; a convenient scapegoat for the fall of man, Eve's character has repeatedly been subject to misogynistic interpretation and adaptation. To repair the modern audience's perception of Eve, she must somehow acquire a depth of character that is not easily

garnered from existing interpretations of the Genesis narrative. Queering is one approach to character-building that distinguishes Eve from her established role as “mother of mankind”; rather than being defined only by her heterosexual relationship with Adam, her character is expanded by the implication of queer desire and pleasure. However, beyond Milton's work, the notion of a sapphic Eve provokes a larger conversation about the merits of queer interpretation. This framework of reparative reading allows readers to question the idea of “biblical womanhood,” while at the same time challenging the presumed heteronormativity embedded within many adaptations of Genesis. At a time when hard-fought queer rights are being increasingly encroached upon by outwardly discriminatory legislation, queer interpretation of religious (and particularly Christian) texts and figures has become a powerful means by which queer people can resist the weaponization of doctrine against them.

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THE STYLE OF LAW: WHY LEGAL LANGUAGE SEEMS SO CONVOLUTED

by Emma Tharpe

It is commonly known that various occupations use specialized language that tends to confuse those not familiar with the profession. In the field of law, the need for precision outweighs our preference for simplicity. In other words, one would not want often-confused everyday language used in such important contexts as laws or contracts. The casual way we speak is simple and easy to understand, but this simplicity and the sometimes-vague nature of our statements tends to result in misinterpretation. As one could surmise, in a legal context ambiguity could cause numerous problems, such as justice not being delivered, or the law being conducted incorrectly. In fact, legal ambiguity is such a pressing issue that there are numerous articles dedicated to the subject. Cornell Law School provides the example of *Tobin v. Gluck*, which defines ambiguity as “whether a reasonably intelligent person looking at the contract objectively could interpret the language in more than one way” (Cornell). In efforts to avoid this, legal jargon is used to be as precise as possible. However, the text of legal documents might be near-incomprehensible to a layperson. Indeed, there is a reason hardly anyone wastes time attempting to decipher the fine print of a contract. Legal jargon is so notorious it is known commonly as “legalese,” a term that originated in 1914 and is defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “the

specialized language of the legal profession” (Merriam-Webster). Legal documents are littered with such archaic words as “herein, therein, and whereas” (Butt 28); Latin phrases such as *actus reus*, *habeas corpus*, and *force majeure* also feature heavily as a result of past precedent, or *stare decisis* (Cornell).

As the legal expert Jay Feinman describes it:

The law is so complex and voluminous that no one, not even the most knowledgeable lawyer, can understand it all.

Moreover, lawyers and legal scholars have not gone out of their way to make the law accessible to the ordinary person.

Just the opposite: Legal professionals, like the priests of some obscure religion, too often try to keep the law mysterious and inaccessible. (Feinman 3)

In this paper I argue that legal language has complex grammar, uses words that are otherwise infrequent, has changed very little compared to other varieties of English, and as a result, has become less accessible to the average person.

Grammatical Complexity of Legal Language

Despite being intended for precision, legal language often has the opposite effect. Embedded clauses, overlong sentences, overuse of Latin, and of course its characteristic verbosity are all emblematic of legalese. Usage of the present perfect tense is common; an example from the Electronic Data Gathering, Analysis, and Retrieval (EDGAR) database includes the phrase “...no payments, loans or financial benefits have been or will be made by or on behalf of a Group Company...” with the phrase “have been” occurring 338 times according to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). Lengthy sentences are another common feature; one study found “the average sentence length for the *Courts Act 1971* to be 55.11 words” (Hiltunen 41). Sentence complexity is another notable factor. Due to the level of detail

required by legislative text, certain sentence types are used more than others. For example, simple sentences constitute roughly 20% of legal texts, and compound sentences a mere 6% (Hiltunen 43). Complex sentences are the most common type (Hiltunen 43). Legal language features subordinate clauses heavily, with the left-branching, right-branching, and nested forms; the nested subordinate clause is perhaps the most infamous and confusing (44). An example of this is as follows: “*A person* who, when riding a cycle, not being a motor vehicle, on a road or other public place, is unfit to ride through drinks or drugs, *shall be guilty of an offence*” (Road Traffic Act 1972, c. 20 (19) (1) qtd. in Hiltunen 44). This is more of an extreme example, but the format is common, nevertheless. Another widespread characteristic is that of the complex noun phrase:

The body which, immediately before the coming into force of this subsection, was known as the Postal Services Commission and was designated in accordance with Article 22 of the Postal Services Directive as a national regulatory authority for the postal sector in the United Kingdom is hereby abolished. (Postal Services Act, 2000 c. 26 (1)(4) qtd. in Hiltunen 46)

This is another example of the intricacy of legal writing, illustrating the need to be specific, though also how such a lengthy sentence might confuse the average reader.

Lexical Complexity of Legal Language

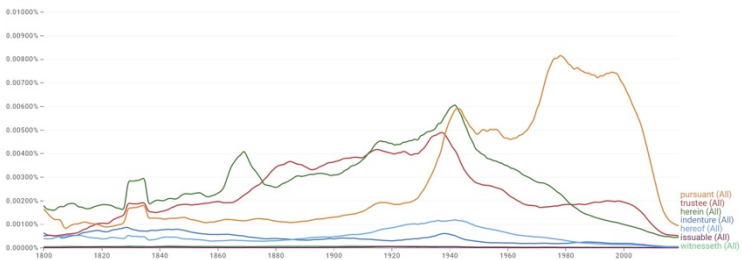
This research constituted comparisons between the frequency of certain words in a database of books versus legal texts. I used the Voyant Tools application to analyze words in legal documents, then found the most frequent words and input those in the program Google Ngram, a tool that enables one to search for terms throughout a corpus of texts. I utilized the EDGAR Search and Access tool, created by the SEC, to find legal documents to use in my analysis. Using the EDGAR tool, I compiled five legal

documents and input them into the Voyant Tools application. The most frequent words included agreement (with a frequency of 247 times), “shares” (207), “bank” (197), “trust” (180), and “shall” (177). The recurrence of finance-related words is due to the EDGAR database primarily being composed of financial documents submitted by companies, as well as individual filings. Other frequently used words included indenture, hereof, issuable, pursuant, and herein. Interestingly, the average word length for a sentence was 40.9 words, with the longest sentence being forty-four words. American Journal Experts writes that the average sentence length in scientific texts is 12-17 words, and peer reviewed literature ranges from 25-30 words, with a good average for most writing being a length of 20-25 words (Newell). Legal writing,



infamous for its wordiness, is naturally much higher than any of these examples. As a visual aid, I used the site wordclouds.com to generate this word cloud (the frequency of “Rider” and “Rowe” is due to that being the names of the filers). Among the largest words are the expected “bank,” “global,” and

“trustee,” as well as the classic “shall.” Other smaller but still significant words include pursuant and indenture, both frequently used in legal contexts.



This graph is from Google Ngram, depicting the trend of several words from 1800 to 2019 in literature and other works. The words were chosen for their frequency in the legal language specifically; they were not as common as words like ‘bank,’ but common, nonetheless. They tended to spike at seemingly random times, though all tended to take a sharp downturn at the advent of the 21st century. The reason for this will require further inquiry, but the shared decrease towards the end reflects the decreasing use of such archaic legal terms.

Legal Precedent and Linguistic Stagnation

Law in the English-speaking world was affected by those who came before, such as the Normans, who added a French influence, as well as the Danes and Anglo-Saxons (Tiersma 13). The Romans especially had an impact on the language of the law, with Latin being used for an array of legal terms (Tiersma 13). America continued to use the common law system of England when they won independence, as well as retaining similar legal language (Tiersma 23). Legalese largely exists due to the concept of *stare decisis*, which states that law is to be based on past precedent (Cornell). This principle is often beneficial, as it makes sure the law is consistent; however, a major drawback is that, in keeping with precedent, older, more archaic language never quite fades out of use as it would in other contexts (Tjaden 398). Historically, clerks would be paid more the more words they wrote, thus setting a precedent for overlong sentences (Tjaden 398). Additionally, law being what it is, it is essential to be as precise as possible and to convey exactly what is meant, leaving no room for misinterpretation. Tjaden states, “Trying to anticipate every possible scenario... is not always a bad thing, but it can sometimes be unnecessary, especially when done unconsciously when lawyers are blindly copying past precedents” (Tjaden 398). Elitism, perhaps,

is another reason- put simply, using fancy words in a profession deemed to be elite (Tjaden 398).

Conclusion

The jargon of law, termed “legalese,” is infamous for its verbose nature and grammatical complexity; its unique grammatical features make it stand out from other registers of language and it is the subject of much criticism from those in the legal profession and non-lawyers alike. Many criticize legalese as being designed for the average person to have difficulty understanding it, accusing lawyers of using excessively long words to sound smarter or to justify charging higher fees (Bingham). A campaign, the Plain Language movement, has emerged advocating for more simplified language in legal writing (“Plain Language: Beyond a Movement,” n.d.). This movement is growing quickly in popularity and would ensure people know their rights without requiring a lawyer to interpret it. Perhaps in the future the language of law will become more accessible to the average layperson, but until then one will need a thick dictionary to decipher the enigma of legal writing.

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MANIFESTING SNOWBALLS: LESSONS ON CONNECTION IN “CROSSING BROOKLYN FERRY”

by Cash Turner

An earnest heart and an open mind unlock parts of one's heart that reflect who they are, and how they see the world – their vision. Walt Whitman's distinctive affection for the world and his readers and his acute observations of people and places forge a special connection with readers that enriches the monotony of everyday life in his famous work “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry.” In this poem, Whitman describes his thoughts on the flowing of the water, the beauty in people's faces he passes by, and the grand scheme of the intertwining elements—nature, humanity, present and future--as he perceives them. Whitman shows that by stretching out your arms, drawing in your breath, and opening your mind, you, the reader, embark on the first steps in inviting curiosity and appreciation for the world, your students, and for your neighbors. When I was a high school student, the little things teachers did were the things that inspired me to get into teaching. Whether it was a small compliment on my positive attitude or an acknowledgment pertaining to a bit of progress I had made, the great experiences with intentional teachers in high school all added up to form a curiosity in me akin to Whitman's. This curiosity blossomed into actively pursuing the idea that I could do the same thing for future generations as my teachers did for me. Great teachers are not solely focused on content or the following of rules – no! A great

education starts with the teacher's establishment of strong connection with the students because they know class must be relational to be the best it can be. To establish and maintain strong teacher-student relationships is to be *intentional* with content, teaching, speaking, and writing at a higher level as Whitman does with a steady compassion.

Whitman shows us that to be a great teacher, you must show your students how much you care by exercising innovative forward-thinking. In "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," Whitman pays impeccable attention to detail to create a relationship with readers that begs them to believe his words can stretch beyond the limitations of physical space and the vastness of gaps of generations – far out! Whitman writes (observing the life of the ferry boat and river) of "The glories strung like beads on my smallest sights and hearings, / on the walk in the street and the passage / over the river." Winifred Bevilacqua explains that "One of these 'glories'—the river [Whitman] is crossing—reminds him that they will not always be within the range of his immediate perception, for the passage of time is swiftly carrying him away" (Bevilacqua 144). Whitman establishes this *innovative* relationship by speaking to the generations to come, acknowledging their future presence despite understanding his time will eventually be over: "I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or ever / so many generations hence." Christopher David Case notes how Whitman "now addresses these future passengers and readers in the present tense, by affirming, 'I am with you,' thereby projecting his existence forward, and in a sense transcending the limitations of time and space" (42). Those few words themselves capture so much: "transcending the limitations of time and space." Whitman was so innovative and forward-thinking that you could almost believe he was somehow thinking of just you and writing about you long before you were born. Attempting to break the confines of literal time and space to touch the reader's heart in a refreshing way

speaks to the scope at which Whitman aims in his poetry and *is* the scope at which every fruitful teacher should aim.

To have a great voice, you must have a great intention behind the words you speak. Whitman's words are undoubtedly beautiful, and in each line, you can find something to enjoy like "the sunset, the pouring-in of the flood-tide, the / falling-back to the sea of the ebb-tide." These charming lines do not come without intentional placement, and as a teacher, you do not come to class unprepared. You cannot just speak out of thin air with flattering words thoughtfully composed about a subject. You cannot satisfyingly relate to others without the intention to. You cannot simply expect others to connect with you. Meaningful relationships require a desire and a longing to leave behind the mediocrity of monotony. Monotony dwells within those who decide to remain bland, and within the abandonment of purposely challenging and developing one's cognitive abilities. Whitman exudes the characteristics of an authoritative teacher with his democratic vision and intentionality to stretch beyond the norms and thought processes of the society he lived in – which in many ways, sounds like the society we live in today. In section 4, Whitman writes, "The men and women I saw were all near to me, / Others the same—others who look back on me because I look'd forward to them." The men and women who look back at him turn his way because he first chose to look at them. It may be a small connection, but it's a purely intentional one.

To break up the monotony of life, one must find beauty in the small details that envelop them. Whitman saw special attributes in the routines of everyday life that other people overlooked and still do. I am sure people grew used to riding the ferry and seeing the flow of the water along with the faces they passed. Whitman looked past the value of public transportation to find the value of bringing things together – the flow of water, people, and life. The scope of Whitman is as large as the universe, but in his grandeur,

he pays attention to those tiny details and notes that all these things “continue to envelop the soul” like a camera. Everyone is unique, but each individual is also capable of becoming the greatest version of themselves they can be. He writes to the future ferry-crossers as I am writing to my future students. He writes almost as if he’s shining a light directly upon the lonely, self-conscious reader:

We use you, and do not cast you aside—we plant you
 permanently within us,
 We fathom you not—we love you—there is perfection in you
 also,
 You furnish your parts toward eternity,
 Great or small, you furnish your parts toward the soul.

Finding perfection and divinity in oneself is hard when you’re a middle-schooler going through puberty and are attempting to figure life out. Whitman writes, “great or small,” you and your actions “furnish [themselves] toward the soul.” My students will know that their teacher will come to class every day with a Whitmanesque love and care no matter how hard life may be to figure out, and no matter how great or small they may feel.

To be a great writer, you must first find honesty within yourself. As a writer and an innovator, Whitman’s ability to imaginatively conjure proactive manifestations and visions of generations of people to come after him is done with great care and expertise that stems from his sincerity. He writes that the future crossers of the Brooklyn ferry occupy his meditations more “than you might suppose.” This level of honesty and love is overwhelmingly evident and seems to come at such an ease for him, like wiggling your toes or opening your eyes. His curiosity is almost childlike, and instead of shying away from the words he yearns to say, he thrusts them out with a shameless confidence. As a future middle-school teacher, I envy Whitman’s prowess in conveying his thoughts, but also his ability to create a forward connection with his reader. As a former middle-school student, I

admired my teacher's ability to create these bonds with my classmates and with the child I once was. Now, as a college student, I immediately recognized I was admiring Whitman's abilities reminiscent of the teachers in my past when I read through "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" for the first time. I knew something powerful lived within Whitman's words before I could even fully land my finger on it.

To manifest greatness for oneself, one must wish greatness upon others. Whitman craftily reaches out to the reader with a leathery hand you can't help but hold. He relates himself to the reader in section three:

Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky, so I felt,
 Just as any of you is one of a living crowd, I was one of a crowd,
 Just as you are refresh'd by the gladness of the river and the bright flow, I was refresh'd.

An incredible comfort washes over the reader and invites them to join Whitman in his humble Brooklyn journeys. He too was "one of a crowd," just as you and I. In his meditations, he doesn't wish to be a gatekeeper of the allure of the ferry ride for himself; he calls upon the reader to enjoy it with him with the warm simplicity of four gentle words – "I am with you." Defeating the drowning intensity of loneliness students can feel is not only a goal of mine, but the driving force behind my efforts. The following lines from Weezer's "Aloo Gobi" are akin to Whitman's "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry":

You are not alone
 You are not alone
 Someone else will be there with you, be there with you
 You are not alone (Cuomo, lines 20-23)

Being selfless and wishing to extend a helping hand to and for others is what makes a good person and is what makes a

worthwhile teacher. These Whitman-aspirations establish a connection that “forge[s] bonds that overcome the intense separateness of each individual” (Bevilacqua page 2). Simply showing someone that they are not alone can be enough to enrich their life. Christopher David Case writes that Whitman’s writings have become “something greater than the world itself, something that resists description and definition” (Case 3). This meta-description of Whitman alone resonated with me and is one that I hope sticks with me when I talk about my excitement for his poetry to and for my future students.

To believe in a hopeful future, one must understand that time will reach us all and the future will inevitably be here before we know it. To my future students, I take delight in Whitman’s words:

What is it then between us?

What is the count of the scores or hundreds of years between us?

Whatever it is, it avails not—distance avails not, and place avails not . . .

Nothing separates humanity but a little bit of time and a little bit of space. Whitman gets that. Nothing can separate intentional connection and the power of manifested love but some time and space. Just as Whitman did, “I consider’d long and seriously of you before you were born.” Really, “what is it then between us” but a little bit of time that will slip away and a little bit of care that will grow? My affection for teaching affects my admiration for Whitman and his tender pedagogical nature. Together, everything works to “furnish your parts toward the soul.” Manifestations from more than one-hundred years ago did what they intended to do. They touch a soul from the future, despite the time and space. Nothing can truly separate the strings that hold us together, and the hope that can start to snowball within us all like a train of thought or a spiritual experience on a ferry.

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HOUSE OF MIRRORS: REFLECTIONS IN *CLEO FROM 5 TO 7*

by Daniel Ungs

Since the very beginning, film has been a reflection of reality. Although the purpose of the medium is malleable and ever-changing, the inescapability of real world dilemmas and developments remains pertinent to the growth of the artform. Nearly simultaneous to the beginning of the second wave of feminism, revolutionary director Agnes Varda began writing and directing movies in the masculine heat of the French New Wave. A unanimously original and abrasive voice that pushed the film medium to its formal limits, Varda offered a female oriented perspective in a world that is often solely examined through the dominant male gaze, as coined by film theorist Laura Mulvey. Varda's sophomore film, *Cleo from 5 to 7* (1962), exists as an understated glimpse into feminist attitudes of the time period. Much like the medium it exists through, the film is a house of mirrors — both literal and metaphorical — shrouded in a complex smog. Varda's experimental utilization of reflections in *Cleo from 5 to 7* creates female subjectivity, making the film an integral entry into feminist counter cinema. Additionally, the film functions as a self-reflexive glimpse into the marginalization caused by a gender conforming society.

Prior to examining the layered motifs packed into Varda's film, it is important to understand the existence of counter cinema and

how *Cleo from 5 to 7* establishes its mode of communication early in the narrative. According to Teresa de Lauretis, feminist cinema needed to “define all points of identification (with character, image, camera) as female, feminine, or feminist” (qtd. in Cook, 494). So not only does the narrative need to feature a female protagonist, but the spectator must exist through her subjectivity and must view her surroundings through her gaze. While this does not mean the apparatus has to exist solely from her first-person point-of-view, it does mean the captured reflections must adopt a feminist lens and assume the spectator as female. *Cleo from 5 to 7* opens with a tarot card reading, with Cleo — the “doomed” protagonist — receiving confirmation of her inevitable demise. She suspects she has cancer, and it’s only a matter of time before the sickness overcomes her. Upon receiving the dreadful news, the world changes from color to black and white to reflect her mental wellbeing. Not only does this tonal editing experimentation reject traditional medium expectations, it places the spectator directly into the headspace of the female character. Her previously colorful world has faded into a dull, monotonous void of curious eyes and empty faces. The gaze of the bystanders waiting outside the apartment is invasive and alienating. Early on, Varda is teaching the spectator how to watch her film and how to exist in a female driven subjectivity.

Mere minutes into *Cleo from 5 to 7*, the director presents the first of many reflections: a physical mirror. Cleo, shortly after leaving the tarot card reading, stops and stares into her own reflection in an elegant hallway. She fixes her dress, tilts her head, and softly smiles at the image reflecting back in an attempt to calm herself. The camera closes in, Cleo’s reflection consumes the screen. “Ugliness is a kind of death,” she says, “As long as I’m beautiful, I’m even more alive than the others.” This brief, yet provocative internal monologue is another early instance of Varda forcing the spectator to exist within the headspace of the female protagonist. Teresa de Lauretis argues that “narration is one of the

ways of reproducing subjectivity; each story derives its structure from the subject's desire and from its inscription in social and cultural codes" (qtd. in Cook, 494). The image of Cleo is visible to everyone, but the voice is not. The spectator is subjected to her thoughts and emotions, but the outside world is only concerned with her external appearance. She is the only character with any internal narration, causing the spectator to sympathize with her solely and experience the world through her point of view. Cleo seems to have internalized and conformed to many of the gender expectations of the time period. But this reflection of her, the public image, isn't the truth. She is afraid and alone. She must remain beautiful and contained as beauty will keep her immortal. Her identity has been completely detached from her physical being. The camera zooming in on the reflection, until it is all the audience can see, presents the events of the film itself as a reflection. Varda's film acts as a mirror to real world gender politics. As *Cleo from 5 to 7* progresses, physical mirrors serve as a reminder of how Cleo is perceived by the rest of the world and how she has become detached from herself. The spectator, existing in this world through her gaze, experiences this marginalization firsthand.

Music can be viewed as another form of reflection within *Cleo from 5 to 7*. Cleo is a recording artist whose voice is well known throughout Paris. As time passes, the spectator suspects that the main character is self-conscious about the sound of her singing voice. She commands a cab driver to turn off one of her songs playing on the radio and insists that the vocals be rerecorded at a later date. However, it is not until the scene in her loft that the spectator can really begin to understand the effect music has on Cleo. Shortly after her lover leaves, songwriters come over to show her the music they've been working on. As she begins to sing, the camera methodically moves closer until her head is the only visible object within the frame's black void. The tightening of the frame in this instance is meant to showcase how Cleo is crowded by her environment, yet emotionally alone. "Beauty wasted, cold and

naked,” she sings with tears in her eyes, “Gnawed away by despair, my body decays on a crystal bier.” The lyrics, written by her male songwriters, directly reflect the emotional state the young artist is currently experiencing. She has been told by the people around her that if she voices her anxieties she will be seen as vulnerable, which is an unattractive for a woman. However, through song, her vulnerability is transparent. The only way she can show true, complex emotion is through art — which is even written by men. Everything in her life is controlled by her peers. Cleo challenges this masculine dominance by returning the gaze of the apparatus. In *Theory of Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, Laura Mulvey argues, “Pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female” (837). Florence looks directly through the camera and refuses to allow her pain and suffering to be indulged in. Rather, she is communicating her emotions through this established link between herself and the spectator. She has shifted from the passive to the active. Additionally, due to the events of *Cleo from 5 to 7* being presented through a female subjectivity, the camera is assumed to be female. As the apparatus closes in, the look the spectator enacts is not one of invasion or domination, but of understanding. Cleo is looking for someone, anyone, she can emotionally confide in — which is the spectator.

In the final act of *Cleo from 5 to 7*, she meets a talkative soldier named Antoine who will be deployed to Algeria later in the evening. He is the final, and perhaps most important, reflection as he allows Cleo to see herself as a full person. He is the only character to ask for her real name: Florence. Dressed in a white button down to contrast her black attire, he tells Florence about his fear of dying in war after learning about her looming diagnosis. He claims that women love in halves: “Their bodies are playthings, not their lives.” This reference to the detachment between the external and the internal alludes back to the detachment the protagonist has experienced throughout the film, as seen in the visual motif of

mirrors. Her image and emotions are separate entities. Additionally, Antoine represents the opposite end of the gender binary: stoic masculinity in the face of adversity. He, too, contemplates his mortality as he awaits an invisible demise. Similar to Florence, he must contain his emotions and carry himself with grace — if not he would be deemed weak by society. Both sides of the gender binary system are expected to uphold the traditional bargains of their gender roles, no matter the situation. The connection between Florence and Antoine demonstrates a shared alienation. The final minute of the film is a medium shot of the pair walking in unison, mirroring each other's movements as they process their respective fates. They look forward, then into each other's eyes, then forward again. Silently. Although they are well aware of the challenges that they face, they feel at ease — liberated, even — knowing that they are not alone. In “Return to the Self: Agnes Varda’s *Cleo from 5 to 7*,” Arijana Zeric notes that Antoine sees Florence as a “whole being” and “the framing and camera angles suggest equality between the two human beings.” The spectator watches as Florence and Antoine share one final gaze. The protagonist is once again looking into a reflection of herself, but a more sincere and honest one — allowing her to take control of both her body and soul at last. This conclusion is subversive for its ambiguity, but also for its rejection of a traditional Hollywood ending. Florence’s climactic fulfillment isn’t found in romantic heterosexual love, but in acceptance of herself as a complete being. “I think my fear is gone,” she says, “I think I’m happy.” The camera cuts to black.

The audience will never know whether they live or die, whether they fall in love or grow apart. In the end, it doesn’t really matter. This open-ended conclusion subverts the viewer’s expectations of dominant narrative cinema. With *Cleo from 5 to 7*, Agnes Varda managed to not only capture the feminist attitudes and marginalization of the time period, but also created a film that exists solely through a female subjectivity. The film begins with the establishment of a house of mirrors and ends with the

deconstruction of one. The diegesis depicts the protagonist's journey from Cleo to Florence, public perception to self-discovery. Ahead of its time, *Cleo From 5 to 7* as an important addition to the feminist counter cinema canon.

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DOWNTOWN BUSY

by Bobbi Coffee

“And there seemed to be no way to remove this cloud that stood between them and the sun, between them and love and life and power, between them and whatever it was that they wanted.”

-- James Baldwin, “Down at the Cross: Letter From a Region in My Mind,” *The New Yorker*, 1962¹



When I lived in Louisville, I took a photo of a woman in the street. Curly red hair, pink shirt, gray sweats, and barefooted. She was laying down, spine to Broadway Avenue cement. A JCTC patrol officer standing above her, in the middle of the four-way intersection. In the photo the cars have stopped. The picture is as grainy and gritty as downtown Louisville.

¹ “Down at the Cross...” was first published in *The New Yorker* in 1962; later being added to his book *The Fire Next Time*, along with “My Dungeon Shook: Letter to My Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation” in 1963.

I looked at my friend, Keith, with his Jackson 5 afro and colorful urban getup. He, as well as I, was not surprised, just curious, as we often were in downtown Louisville. We walked past the piss-stained alleyways infected with lingering jaywalkers. Past the TARC stops filled with people, who always unfortunately had too many bags to carry. Past the man on the curb across from The Brown Hotel, who was always selling something to make you forget how gritty Broadway Ave. really was. After classes, we found our way into mom-and-pop convenience stores, looking for Grippo's and Calypso Lemonade.

I had known Keith since Atherton High School. He was social then, surrounded by a circle of friends whose radius decreased as graduation crept closer. It was no one's fault but time, and he became more reserved as more time passed. I graduated before him, and we would later come back together at JCTC. He didn't really want to be in college but felt that it was what he needed to do to move forward. Another shot in the dark, a strike of the match. "I don't really know what else to do," he had said. I stayed for a year in Louisville. We spent our weekends at St. Matthew's Mall and El Nopal. Our weekdays were spent Facetimeing and studying for exams soon postponed by COVID. When I moved back to Bowling Green, he dropped out.

In James Baldwin's "Down at the Cross: Letter from a Region in My Mind," he stated that his friends "became, in the twinkling of an eye, unutterably different and fantastically *present*." However, that change was "more vivid in the boys," and I, like Baldwin, became "aroused with discomfort;" but I, unlike Baldwin, wanted to immediately do the same. Keith stayed in Louisville for a while, before moving to LA. It's what he always wanted to do. Soon his colorful urban clothing was replaced with a more refined, neutral urban style. His afro was replaced with a low, curly taper. The boys in Baldwin's story dropped out too, viewing school as a "child's

game that no one could win.” They became what Baldwin described as “downtown busy.”²

I wonder if Keith is downtown busy now. He’d only been to LA once before moving there entirely. Trading Louisville’s Broadway Avenue with the outskirts of inner-city LA. Baldwin described that you can often find these boys in threes or fours; sharing bottles of whiskey or wine, fighting “the man.” I Facetime with Keith sometimes, with our friend Madison. Often when he’s cooking something vegetarian and downing a bottle of Barefoot Moscato, alone. We ask him what it’s like to move away from the Midwest. I ask if the racism is any better, if he is still fighting as hard as he had to in Kentucky. Baldwin said that “People are not...terribly anxious to be equal, but they love the idea of being superior.” I knew that for Kentucky, but I hoped better for California. He said it is just “different.”

Baldwin would discuss that these “downtown busy” boys couldn’t quite put their finger on who they were fighting, but they knew that there was some force holding them down. Keith and Baldwin know that this is the “white man” and “white society” and what it had created. An insurmountable legacy. This legacy did not belong to black people, but rather the image that was created about black people by white society. An image that makes the cars stop moving, born out of morbid curiosity and unchecked ignorance.

Baldwin knew that the changes needed to make a black person’s situation better would no doubt drastically change the American political and social environment. He said, “white Americans are not simply unwilling to effect these changes...they are unable to envision them.” I imagine the white saviors of post-Civil War society plastering on flags shouting, “Look how it used to be! Nevermind what’s happening now, aren’t you going to say thank you for what we did?” From then I think black children were

² Technically, Baldwin stated that the boys said they were “downtown, ‘busy.’”

taught to settle. To take the pictures, the flags, some glitter and stickers and put it all in a scrapbook. And that book gets passed down through generations, that lesson to “always settle” becomes taught as scripture.

Baldwin stated that it seemed the boys believed they “would rise no higher than their fathers.” And maybe their fathers believed the same about their fathers, leading to boy after boy, man after man, falling synchronously into the path of their predecessor. Maybe they saw the same image where the cars never moved forward and believed that Broadway Avenue is where the story ends. I don’t know much about Keith’s dad, but that’s mostly because he doesn’t know much about him either. But when it comes to Keith being the apple of his father’s eye, I see him as more of a pear or peach or orange. Baldwin describes that a black person’s “power to intimidate” is something we’ve “always had privately, but hitherto could only manipulate privately.” Yet in the face of a stagnant white society, Keith has mastered public intimidation. I think that’s why LA is “just different.”

When Baldwin’s boys became downtown busy, it was an understanding that the world minorities were trying to survive in was not curated for our survival. “The world is white and we are black,” Baldwin had said, and the world wants to keep it that way. In my eyes, I saw “white society” taking pictures and shoving scrapbooks full of poorly made Facebook memes and illiterate rants, trying to convince Keith and I that this is just how it is. Trying to halt the change that was coming and the anger that was brewing. Maybe the world is just white and stagnant, and maybe that’s why black people nowadays are just so damn loud. Loud with our poetry and art and social justice movements. Loud with our hip style changes and carefully layered gold chain necklaces. Loud with the resistance of a stagnant society. Loud like Keith.

When I looked at my Keith on the curb of Broadway Avenue, I saw the insurmountable legacy and his effort to be more than

what it predicted. I saw him trying with school, and knowing that, right now, it just isn't for him. And in knowing that, I saw in him a need to forge a new path. Even after dropping out, through the screen of my phone, I see it now. I see in him no need for stagnancy. Only an immense desire to keep moving forward. To keep morphing without announcing, to never let them know his next move. Talking to him one day, he said "the world is gonna be the way it wants, but I don't really care anymore." The time changed and he changed with it. All while remaining present in our friendship, in his life, encouraging me to follow him into downtown busy.

In Louisville, Keith and I TARC'ed our way to graded papers and promises of tomorrow. We stopped at McDonald's, got coffee and food. Waiting for the crosswalk to say "move forward now," we saw a woman laying down. Spine to Broadway Ave. cement in the middle of the street. I took a photo of that woman, and the cars around us, they just kept on moving.



Keith in Louisville, KY, 2019



Keith on Venice Beach, CA, 2023

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THE CHILD WITH TOURETTE'S

by Henry Johnson

“Whatever falls out contrary to custom we say is contrary to nature, but nothing, whatever it be, is contrary to her.”

-Michel De Montaigne, “Of A Monstrous Child”

When you first find out I have Tourette's, I hear stuff like, “Oh, so you swear a lot?” Possibly. “You don't seem the type!” Or my least favorite, “Oh I think my dog has Tourette's,” proving you know nothing about Tourette's and your dog is annoying. Tourette's is a permanent condition in the nervous system, making people do “tics.” These tics can be any number of things from small movements, saying common phrases, to having full-blown outbursts known as “tic attacks.” It only occurs in approximately one out of 162 children, and the intensity varies in every single child, meaning that no two people's Tourette's are alike. It also often comes paired with either Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), which means that if you're lucky, you will get a doubleheader in new conditions. For me, I got Tourette's and ADHD, and for a long time, my case was not great; I was malformed.

Michel De Montaigne was a French philosopher and writer who lived from 1533 to 1592. He was called one of the first anthropologists because of his many works and studies on humans and their nature. In Montaigne's “A Malformed Child,” also

translated as “Of a Monstrous Child,” published in 1580 and first translated in 1608, he talks about a child he saw in the square the other day being paraded around for its birth deformities. He shows how even the perceived unnatural is natural and not dissimilar to normal people and how they live their lives. Being normal is not a checklist that one goes through to see if they fit the bill; it is the perceptions of others cast onto us. It is a perfect ideal controlled to differentiate between normal and imperfect people.

It's not always the people we expect to reinforce this concept who do. Montaigne's essay says, “I saw a child being led around by two men and a nurse (they said they were its father, uncle, and aunt) to make a few sous by showing it, because of its strangeness.” The family was the first to know and treat it differently than others. This comments on how, at times, whether directly or indirectly, people who care for you might reinforce a harmful ideal. My parents, as much as they tried not to follow this path, did in some ways. I remember sitting in the back of the 1998 deep green-colored Saturn being stuck in the line for drop-off at elementary school. I was humming, and, at first, it was a tic, but when I noticed it annoyed my sister, I kept doing it anyway. I was a brat. Then my sister finally complained, saying, “Mom! Henry won't stop humming!” I knew that would be the end of it. I clenched the tan padding of the seat, waiting for the inevitable scolding for annoying my sibling. It never came. Instead, she said, “Sweetie, Henry can't help it; he has Tourette's. Henry, can you try to be quieter with your humming?” My sister replied, “But he's doing it on purpose!” Mom said, “He is just ticking. If you wait, it will stop eventually.”

After that, I stopped humming. Somehow, it hurt more to be excused at that moment, to be given a pass on bad behavior. It felt like I was being paraded as a specimen rather than their child; it felt like the Tourette's was the kid and I the casing. Much like how one would parade a child as a prop in a square just as in Montaigne's

essay, where the family, for better or worse, showed their child off. However, this is not the fault of the parents, but the ideal itself; by no longer being considered the norm, it justifies actions outside the norm. Whether that is to parade your child like the family in Montaigne or to define a young boy by the problems he had rather than the person he was.

Some people have asked, “How does it feel to have Tourette’s?” And, to that, I couldn’t tell you. I don’t know what it feels like not to have Tourette’s. In Montaigne’s essay, we see that he first describes the child with what makes it normal. He states, “The rest was all quite normal: he was standing on his feet, walking, and babbling pretty much like others the same age.” Then he shows how the child is conjoined, cries strangely, and doesn’t eat quite right. If you asked someone about me when my Tourette’s was bad, maybe the first thing said would be nice. Then, much like in this text, the tone shifts.

When my tics got bad in fifth grade, every so often, my teacher would have to explain it to the class. I could not tell you what the teacher said, because typically, I was out in the hall in those moments trying to control my tics. So, if I had to imagine what they said, it went something along the lines of, “Henry has Tourette’s, but the rest of him is all quite normal. Now back to work.” Just as in Montaigne’s “A Malformed Child,” this really wouldn’t answer any of the questions anyone had. When walking back into class, I could see that they knew something was different with me and were curious to understand it better. They wanted to understand *it*, not me. I was back to losing my identity to my problems. After a week, everyone would eventually stop caring for children, care very little to try and investigate complex things like Tourette’s. I would go back to being the weird kid who sometimes did strange things until one of those strange things saw fit to remind everyone how different I was. Then I would be back to the

kid with Tourette's and be asked questions like "How does it feel?" once again.

I ran from those questions. Remade my image as quickly as possible to make sure only those who knew already would know. I created safeguards and learned strategies to hide my tics and stop them from becoming worse. It worked. I managed to make people completely unaware of the other version of me. I managed to keep that entire part of my life a secret from my new friends, and even some of my older friends started to forget. In Montaigne's essay, he mentions another person saying, "I have just seen a herdsman in Medoc, of about thirty years of age, who has no sign of any genital parts." Then, proceeding with this information, he says that despite this challenge, the herdsman still grows a beard, has desire, and wants to be with a woman. Anyone with any sort of issue can relate to this herdsman in some way. The herdsman, despite everything, wants and strives to be normal to follow the ideal of working hard to gain acceptance. He simply wants what everyone wants: to succeed despite the faults of his birth.

However, memory is not easily forgotten, and everyone has a history, no matter how hard you run from it. I remember being in class. The glossy glare of the tanned wooden desk and the poor metal and blue plastic chairs I spent countless hours in. The staining light of the white, fluorescent lights colored the world in a pale glow. I was working on one of the many dreaded group projects in my high school English class, where inevitably I and one other person would do most of the work, while the rest watched. It was me and five other people, some I had hardly spoken to, whereas others I had known for what felt like my whole life. I was chatting with the other person who had been shoehorned into doing most of the work with me, a girl I had known since preschool. We were working diligently when she suddenly stopped. She looked up and said, "You really are different than you used to be. I used to think that you were such a problem.

I'm glad you got better from whatever you had." This should have made me feel happy in some way. After all the running I had done and all the changes I had put myself through to erase my history, it had worked. But instead, I just grew angry. I said, "What's that supposed to mean?" She paused for a second and then said, "Well you used to be really annoying." I asked the teacher a few minutes later if I could go to the bathroom, and once I got there, I punched the wall until my hand went numb.

Two years later, I ran three and a half hours away from home to a college where no one knew my name or past. I was able to start over and remake my image all over again. I had achieved complete detachment of my past from my present, but it still haunted me. I would tic every so often, and then someone would notice it and ask questions that would pull me right back to my past. Everything went well for a year and a half. I remember sitting in class listening and taking notes as the professor went on about how IEPs and 504 plans worked. My professor then started going over some types of conditions that these might apply to. They then said, "Another common one is Tourette's. Does anyone know what Tourette's is?" I stopped writing on T. I couldn't stop staring at the words on the board. Then they asked if anyone knew someone who had Tourette's, and no one raised their hands. I was too scared, and I hated that. The class moved on and I was stuck looking at my notes, at the letter T on my paper. I realized that I knew hardly anything about the problem that plagued me, so I opened my laptop and typed Tourette's into Google. When I saw the search results, I got exactly what I hated: videos of kids swearing, simple explanations, and sketch jokes. Then I clicked on one result, and a video opened on my screen where a man stood in the center and said, "Your Tourette's does not need to define you." I watched that video and cried the whole time, feeling seen in a way I had never been seen before.

When it ended, for the first time in years, I didn't feel like I was fighting between the child who had Tourette's and me. I just felt like me. In Montaigne's essay, he writes, "We call 'unnatural' what does not usually happen. But nothing whatever is contrary to nature." Whether it is the Shepard in Medoc, the Malformed Child, or me, we are natural and caught up in a world astonished to have us even exist.

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TO ANSWER: COMPARING TRANSLATIONS OF BEI DAO'S MOST INFLUENTIAL POEM

by *Abigail Yarbrough*

Bei Dao (pen name of Zhao Zhenkai) is one of China's most celebrated contemporary poets. Much of his work emerged during the late 20th and early 21st century, particularly the years leading up to and following the infamous Tiananmen Square Massacre. He was heavily involved in a group of writers who called themselves the "Misty Poets" (or Menglong Shi Ren, 朦胧诗人), as well as co-founding the underground literary journal *Jintian* (今天, "today"). As the result of his alleged influence on the Tiananmen Square protests, Dao was exiled from China in 1989 ("Bei Dao"). Though published over a decade prior, Bei Dao's poem "The Answer" (or just "Answer" depending on the translation), a piece about refusing to accept what you are told is true and challenging oppressors, captures the voice of the revolutionary students and workers at Tiananmen Square. While the poem holds true to these themes in any translation, the use of language and translation methods by different translators are far from identical. Two such translations are Bonnie S. McDougall's ("The Answer") and Donald Finkel and Xueliang Chen's (titled simply "Answer").

Upon first reading, it is obvious that McDougall and Finkel and Chen took fundamentally different approaches to translating this poem. If you compare these two versions to the original

Chinese text, you will discover that McDougall uses a profoundly literal translation method. The punctuation is consistent with the original text, line breaks are identical, and the poem keeps the directness and flow of the original. Take for example the line, “Let me tell you, world, / I – do – not – believe!”. The original Chinese text reads, “告诉你吧，世界， / 我 – 不 – 相 – 信！” My most direct translation would be, “I tell you, world, / I – do – not – believe!” McDougall’s translation is almost identical.

However, while the preciseness and respect to the original language in McDougall’s translation is commendable, some readers may argue that it lacks in feeling. Finkel and Chen’s translation sacrifices McDougall’s attention to detail for closer ideological accuracy, especially considering the historical and political context of the piece. This accuracy is conveyed as early as the first line of the poem. McDougall’s translation reads, “Debasement is the password of the base, / Nobility the epitaph of the noble”, while Finkel and Chen’s begins, “The scoundrel carries his baseness around like an ID card. / The honest man bears his honor like an epitaph.” McDougall’s word choice evokes a more antiquated eloquence, paying homage to the styles of Western Romantic poets, but Finkel and Chen’s translation begs an altogether different emotional response. You can almost imagine the opening lines shouted from a megaphone by a student or striking worker under the smoggy sky at Tiananmen. The same goes for the following stanzas. What McDougall translates as “Let me tell you, world, / I – do – not – believe!” Finkel and Chen translate as, “Listen. *I don’t believe!*”. There is a defiance, a stomping of feet, in this line that McDougall’s does not quite capture.

The reason for such stark stylistic differences may be simple. McDougall’s translation was published in 1988, while Finkel and Chen’s was published later. Finkel and Chen had the recent tragedy at Tiananmen in 1989 as additional context for the themes of the

poem. This may be why they take such a different approach with the interpretation, using much more urgent word choice and making the poem significantly more accessible to the modern reader than McDougall's earlier translation. In Lawrence Venuti's "How to Read a Translation," he writes, "Merely by choosing words from another language, the translator adds an entirely new set of resonances and allusion designed to imitate the foreign text while making it comprehensible to a culturally different reader" (Venuti). Evidently, this can also be said for works that have already been fully translated. In a way, Finkel and Chen are translating McDougall's version of the poem to make it more understandable.

Another interesting aspect of the two translations is the choice in title. The Chinese word 回答, the piece's original title, translates to "answer." However, while McDougall translates 回答 as "The Answer," *hui da* is a verb (the noun being *da an*, 答案). Therefore, McDougall's translation not only strays from her typical strict reverence for the original text but is also technically wrong. Why would she, as a celebrated translator of Chinese works and an expert on Chinese culture and literature, choose to change the verb to a noun? Perhaps because her translation is not focused on the action of answering, but on the significance and beauty of the answer itself. On the other hand, Finkel and Chen translate the title as "Answer," leaving it ambiguous whether they mean it as a verb or a noun. If they chose verb, then it can be interpreted that this translation focuses more on the act of answering. It could even be taken as a demand, a dare to answer the defiance laid bare in the poem.

Finally, it may be beneficial to consider the backgrounds of all translators discussed and how this may influence interpretations of Bei Dao's poetry. Bonnie McDougall is a Caucasian woman born and currently living in Australia. While she is no doubt linguistically qualified, it is possible that she lacks the cultural context and ability

to understand nuances that a native Chinese person would be able to pick up more easily. Finkel is also white, but he has the advantage of working in partnership with Xueliang Chen, a native speaker. This could be the reason Finkel and Chen's translation not only has a smoother flow than McDougall's, but also why it seems so contextually fluent in comparison.

Bei Dao did not call himself a "Misty Poet" for no reason ("Bei Dao"). The subtlety and mystery of his writing may have been to preserve his own safety as a Chinese citizen, but it also makes for fascinating translation disparities and stylistic dilemmas across translators. Both McDougall and Finkel and Chen effectively translate Bei Dao's "The Answer" for a Western audience, though the two versions emphasize different aspects of the poem. McDougall's translation makes for a thoughtful and intellectual read, while Finkel and Chen's captures the spirit of the revolution and renders the piece accessible for a wider audience. In David Damrosch's "What is World Literature?", he reflects on the idea of ties to national identity through writing. He explains, "Understanding the term 'national' broadly, we can say that works continue to bear the marks of their national origin even after they circulate into world literature" (Damrosch 201). Bei Dao's works certainly convey important reflections of modern Chinese culture in a way that foreign readers can understand and empathize with. Through conducting a close reading and comparison of both versions, one can appreciate all aspects of Bei Dao's "The Answer," and perhaps leave with a deeper understanding of the ideology of the poet himself.

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