Sigma Tau Delta JOURNAL of LITERARY STUDIES

PENTANGLE

NKU 2015

PENTANGLE

Established 1992

Editors
Joseph Brennan
Robert Durborow
Rebecca Hudgins
Dakotah Kennedy

Faculty Advisor
Dr. Andrea Gazzaniga

Cover Art
Castle on a Rock, Karl Friedrich Lessing

Sigma Tau Delta
Pi Omega Chapter

Department of Literature and Language
Northern Kentucky University
Highland Heights, KY 41099

FUNDING FOR THIS PROJECT PROVIDED BY
THE NKU UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH COUNCIL AWARD

Pentangle's History

Pentangle, a journal of student writing, debuted in 1992 at Northern Kentucky University and is sponsored by the Pi Omega chapter of Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society. Pi Omega is committed to the principles of Sigma Tau Delta, as stated in the international pledge: "To advance the study of chief literary masterpieces, to encourage worthwhile reading, to promote the mastery of written expression, and to foster a spirit of fellowship among those who specialize in the study of the English language and of literature."

The name of the journal, *Pentangle*, alludes to the famous image of the pentangle in the Middle English poem, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, where it is a symbol of truth and of the perfection to which Sir Gawain aspires. This association is consistent with the editorial staff's goal of honoring writing of merit in *Pentangle*. The Pentangle title also echoes the title of Sigma Tau Delta's official journal of student writing, *The Rectangle*.

Submission Guidelines

Pentangle solicits submissions of research papers, critical essays, and book reviews pertaining to all areas of literary studies in upper division and graduate courses. Book reviews should be for books written in the last two years. All submissions must be in MLA format (Gibaldi, et al., 7th ed.) and typed using Microsoft Word. Please email all submissions to pentangle@nku.edu. When submitting manuscripts, please include a bioline and contact information.

Editorial Policy

The editors reserve the right to edit submissions for grammar and punctuation. Editing may also include revisions to thesis statements and transitional sentences as well as other changes that clarify the work. The editors will work diligently to ensure that the integrity and intent of the author's work is maintained.

© Northern Kentucky University 2015

No part of this publication may be produced without the permission of the individual authors or artists.

Northern Kentucky University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution. The content, views, and unique perspectives reflected in the literary pieces and artwork contained herein are to be attributed to the writers, not the university, editors, or related sponsors.

Contents

"This place has wonderful powers:"
The Force of Nature in *Howards End*
Rebecca Hudgins 1

An Essential Ambiguity:
Racial Identity in Nella Larsen's *Passing*
Alexis Poe 11

I am Jack's Gender:
The Failure of Static Hypermasculinity in *Fight Club*
Zachary Nothstine. 17

The Fordian Woman:
Challenging Western Archetypes in *The Searchers*
Alyssa Faught. 27

Joyce vs. Rowling: Sexist or Feminist
Robert Durborow 33

Slipping the Noose: The Immortality of Human Experience in Philip Larkin's *The Less Deceived*
Zachary Nothstine. 43

A Spiritual Journey: Faith and Puritanism in *Robinson Crusoe*
Melissa Van Treeck 49

Tao, the Environment, and Winnie the Pooh
Robert Durborow 57

The Byronic Hero:
Its Influences and Legacy on 20th-Century Literature
Heather Owens 63

"This place has wonderful powers:" The Force of Nature in *Howards End*

Rebecca Hudgins

Historically, in their relation to nature, women have been associated with the passive, fertile and beautiful, while men are not understood in relation to nature itself but by their ability to dominate and enhance the natural world. Immanuel Kant in his book, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime,* notes this distinction between the genders. He declares that women "…prefer the beautiful to the useful," while men are noble (77). Because of his claim about the sexes, Kant then argues that "the virtue of woman is a *beautiful virtue*. That of the male sex should be a *noble virtue*" (81). This active versus passive binary can be seen in relation to how men and women interact with nature: women enjoy nature for its beauty, while men act on nature to make it noble. E. M. Forster's novel *Howards End*, challenges the association of women and nature as being inherently passive and men as having the agency to aid nature to make it powerful and noble.

The majority of scholarship on *Howards End* is grounded in phallocentric understandings of women and nature that privilege the patriarchal social order. Lionel Trilling, in his influential book on E. M. Forster states, "*Howards End* is about England's fate…it asks the question, 'Who shall inherit England?'" (118). This critical interpretation of the novel leaves nature as a passive object that is not only being acted upon but also is being possessed by men as a

means to discuss larger issues in society. Trilling's interpretation of *Howards End* determined the direction of Forster's criticism, leading to understanding nature as property and an object in the novel. Contemporary scholarship typically focuses on the ways in which the house at Howards End symbolizes problems of class, society, property and nostalgia[1]. The issue with this line of critical thought is that it objectifies nature, and furthers the notion that the natural world is for men to control and own, which is precisely what Forster was writing against. Despite what present criticism of *Howards End* claims, nature is more than a passive backdrop to the actions of men in the novel; instead, nature itself is aligned with humanity and has agency along with the people in the novel. Rather than separating humans and nature in *Howards End,* nature needs to be seen as a force that brings people together.

A common theme running through *Howards End* is that of the intangible "inner life" and tangible "outer life." Women feel connected to the unseen, inner life which is more valuable than the life of "telegrams and anger" (Forster 18) that the men value. Forster presents nature as an all-encompassing unseen, inner life to which we belong: "Nature… comes nearer to us than do these crowds of men… the earth is explicable—from her we came and as a we must return to her" (Forster 77). It is important to read *Howards End* as understanding nature as an agent from which we came and as a sustainer of life rather than simply as a setting. But because men reject the natural world, they are not described as having the same sort of connection to the land that women have. This can be seen in contrast to the way Forster discusses London, which is a male realm: "London thwarted her; in its atmosphere she could not concentrate. London only stimulates, it cannot sustain…" (Forster 107). The male influenced city is not a place that breeds life, like the country. London is even described as seeming "satanic" (Forster 60). One of the goals of ecocriticism is to explain this unseen connection between humans and nature, and nature's influence on humanity. As Iman Hanafy points out, "Ecocriticism attempts a negotiation between the human and the nonhuman...Nature possesses a language of its own that enables it to communicate with people and consequently conditions what passes for knowledge about it." (Forster 94). It is important to read *Howards End* from a perspective that values the relationship between humans and the natural world rather than one that values the way men act upon the planet. When viewing nature as connected to humanity, the significance of the universe and its power become clear in *Howards End.*

In addition to nature interacting with people in *Howards End,* men and women in the novel also interact with nature. Women embrace and understand the power of nature. In fact, women, like Mrs. Wilcox, are so immersed in the universe that they are described as being nature: "She approached just as Helen's letter had described her, trailing noiselessly over the lawn, and there was actually a wisp of hay in her hands. She seemed to belong not to the young people and their motor, but to the house, and to the tree that overshadowed it" (Forster 14-15). Because the women embrace and acknowledge the forces of nature, they acquire power from the environment that gives them the ability to be all knowing. Forster outright claims the power that Mrs. Wilcox gains from nature: "She knows everything. She is everything. She is the house, and the tree that leans over it" (225). Mrs. Wilcox is not the only woman who crosses the boundary between human and nature; Miss Avery appears to be aware that Helen is pregnant, before anyone else does, which is seen by the way she set up Howards End with the Schlegels items. She places Tibby's old bassinette in the room that Helen had slept in four years ago, and when she shows Margaret around Howards End, she presents the room as "the nursery" (Forster 195). In addition, Miss Avery makes a prophecy to Margaret, which she ultimately fulfills, by claiming, "you think that you won't come back here to live, Mrs. Wilcox, but you will" (Forster 195). Miss Avery is also depicted as physically being one with nature: "Miss Avery crossed the lawn and merged into the hedge…" (Forster 225). The women in the novel align themselves with nature, and embrace the force of the natural world, instead of fighting against it.

Contrastingly, men attempt to resist and contain nature and often "mistake [its] fertility for weakness" (Forster 131). The only way that Mr. Wilcox can think about nature is in regard to his conquering it, which he notices is different to how the women view the natural world:

> "The world seemed in his grasp as he listened to the River Thames, which still flowed inland from the sea. O wonderful to the girls, it held no mysteries for him. He had helped to shorten its long tidal trough by taking shares in the lock at Teddington, and if he and other capitalists thought good, some day it could be shortened again" (Forster 93).

He sees nature as an object that is to be dominated and controlled, noting that he feels "the world seemed in his grasp," and that he and other capitalists know what is best for nature. Contrastingly,

when Margaret looks at the river, she sees it as living and powerful: "England was alive, throbbing through all her estuaries, crying for joy through the mouths of all her gulls, and the north wind with contrary movement, blew stronger against her rising seas" (Forster 126). Men are unable to see the living quality of the land and dismiss it as a powerless platform for them to build upon and control. Because the men want to use nature and enhance it, they are differentiated from the women, who see nature as a living being that has its own power. Forster describes these contrasting views about the environment by stating that there are "those who have moulded her and made her feared by other lands… [and] those who have added nothing at all to her power, but have somehow seen her, seen the whole island at once, lying as a jewel in a silver sea…" (Forster 126). Forster believes that nature has its own intrinsic power and that the connection the women have with it is superior to the way the men domineer over the earth.

Even though the men dismiss it, nature does have communicative power in *Howards End*. Forster shows the connection that humans have with nature through the wych-elm tree, which is described as,

> "… a comrade, bending over the house, strength and adventure in its roots, but in its utmost fingers tenderness, and the girth, that a dozen men could not have spanned…It was a comrade. House and tree transcended any similes of sex…yet they kept within the limits of human" (Forster 147).

In explaining the tree as having "strength" and "girth, that a dozen men could not have spanned," Forster shows the power that the tree holds. But, the tree is also noted as seeming human, which shows that it is more than just an object. Contemporary scholarship dismisses the tree as being merely a "space of fantasy" (Miraky 51), or is not discussed at all by critics. By ignoring or aligning the tree with the enchanted or mystical, it denies the tree any agency. In reality, this tree is an example of the power that nature holds in *Howards End*, but only the women are able to realize it. For instance, one of the more unusual characteristics about the wych-elm is the pigs' teeth that are stuck in the trunk of the tree. Mrs. Wilcox tells Margaret, "the country people put them in long ago, and they think that if they chew a piece of the bark, it will cure a tooth ache…it would cure anything once" (Forster 50). The women and country people are so invested in the powers of nature, that they join the human with the natural world to cure illnesses. This connection is significant, because while men are so cautiously avoiding nature, women go as far as to put nature in their

bodies to harness its power.

Despite the women being certain of the tree's energy, the men in the novel immediately dismiss any possibility that the wych-elm has any forces on its own. When Margaret asks Mr. Wilcox about the pigs' teeth in the tree, he says "*Pigs' Teeth?* And you chew the bark for a tooth ache? What a rum notion! Of course not!" (Forster 135). In fact, the only times that Mr. Wilcox even acknowledges the tree is in spatial relation to what he has done to Howards End. For instance, Mr. Wilcox tells Margaret that the garage was built "…to the west of the house, not far from the wych-elm" (Forster 51). Instead of acknowledging the tree as its own being, or discussing a connection he has had with the tree, he dismisses any agency that it has. Alternatively, Mr. Wilcox uses the tree as a landmark and backdrop to how he controls nature at Howards End. This is significant in contrast to the conversations the women have about the tree, which are much more humanistic. The women see the tree as a living being that they want to connect with, rather than being just a place marker.

While women and nature are in communion with nature, men are constantly at war with it, and the primary warzone is the house at Howards End itself. Mr. Wilcox believes that the house, and land is only valuable if something can be made from it, which is why he is always altering the house and property with his "improvements" (Forster 66). This contrasts to the way that Mrs. Wilcox views the home; to her the house "had been a spirit" (Forster 70). The types of "improvements" that the Wilcoxes make on the home and its land express a male anxiety about the untamed nature of wildlife, and the subsequent need to contain it. Mr. Wilcox when showing Margaret around the property says, "when I had more control I did what I could: sold two and a half animals, and the mangy pony, and the superannuated tools, pulled down the outhouses; drained; thinned out I don't know how many guelder roses and elder trees…" (Forster 147). Mr. Wilcox does what he can to separate the home from the natural world. He removes the outhouses, so that one does not have to use the restroom outside and he tries to tame down the wild shrubberies by "thinning them out." However, nature fights back to the changes that Mr. Wilcox makes to Howards End. At one point, Miss Avery is described as merging into a hedge on the farm that was "…an old gap, which Mr. Wilcox had filled up, had reappeared, and her track through the dew followed the path that he had turfed over when he improved the garden and made it possible for games" (Forster 225). Nature here is rejecting the "enhancements" that Mr. Wilcox made on the farm by undoing his work. Another example of

the natural world reacting against male control is when Mr. Wilcox comes to show Margaret Howards End for the first time, and the gate was left open, allowing a cow to stray in from the road and "spoil the croquet lawn" (Forster 142). These seemingly minor alterations of Mr. Wilcox's improvements are actually nature expressing its agency by challenging male domination of the land.

Even though men think that they can just dismiss the natural world's powers and subject it to patriarchal control, as *Howards End* shows, the men are less powerful than they think. There are many examples of men asserting their dominance over nature, and the environment reacting against it. The patriarchal world only finds nature important or valid when it is improved on by men or is productive. An example of this would be how the Wilcoxes use nature at Howards End for gaming and exercise, as described through a letter from Helen:

> Later on I heard the noise of croquet balls, and looked out again, and it was Charles Wilcox practicing; they are keen on all games. Presently he started sneezing and had to stop. Then I hear more clicketing, and it is Mr. Wilcox practicing, and then ''a-tissue, a-tissue": he has to stop too. Then Evie comes out, and does some callisthenic exercises on a machine that is tacked on to a greengage tree—they put everything to use—and then she says "a-tissue," and in she goes. And finally Mrs. Wilcox reappears, trail, trail, still smelling hay and looking at flowers. (Forster 2)

The Wilcox family does not enjoy nature for nature's sake as Mrs. Wilcox does; instead, they have to control nature, or make it productive. The men cannot connect with nature spiritually; they can only associate with nature when humans have used it. Unlike Mrs. Wilcox, who embraces the natural realm, the men use nature to play croquet, and Evie uses nature to exercise, as Helen says, "they put everything to use" (Forster 2). Even though this may seem like men dominating nature, the natural world is showing its force in this scene through the men's hay fever, which causes them to sneeze and have to retreat into the house. In fact, Margaret states, "the hay-fever is his [Mr. Wilcox's] chief objection against living…" (Forster 241) at Howards End. While the women think that the air "is delicious" (Forster 2) and Ruth is continually smelling the hay (Forster 2), as Miss Avery puts it, the men cannot "stand up against a field in June…" (Forster 196). The men, despite their insistence on controlling

nature, in some ways are forced to submit to it. Charles Wilcox realizes that this is a weakness and is defensive about it: "Charles Wilcox (the son here) has hay fever too, but he's brave, and gets quite cross when we inquire after it" (Forster 1). At the end of the novel when the women are participating in a beautiful pastoral scene, the men are tucked away in the house, on account of their hay fever: "the room was a little dark and airless; they were obliged to keep it like this until the carting of the hay" (Forster 244). The men want to think that nature is powerless against them, but in reality, nature holds the men hostage.

It is not until the end of the novel that nature asserts its power over the men that try to control it. After Charles kills Leonard, he tells his father about what happened. Mr. Wilcox sits in the garden, while they are discussing the incident and suddenly Mr. Wilcox seems to have undergone a change. Charles even notices this transformation: "Charles did not like it; he was uneasy about his father, who did not seem himself this morning. There was a petulant touch about him—more like a woman" (Forster 235-236). The reason Charles is concerned about his father is because he said that he would walk to the police station, rather than take a motor. Mr. Wilcox says, "I tell you I want to walk: I'm very fond of walking" (Forster 235). His desire to walk is unusual, because throughout the novel, cars are associated with men and culture. All of the men use cars to go everywhere, while the women despise motor rides. After riding in the car, Margaret states, "She felt the whole journey from London had been unreal. They had no part with the earth and its emotions. They were dust, and a stink, and a cosmopolitan chatter" (Forster 153). Because walking is more connected to nature than driving, walking is considered a female activity. This is the first time in the novel that Mr. Wilcox has had any desire to associate himself with the natural world. By sitting in the garden, nature connected with Mr. Wilcox and initiated a change in him.

After Mr. Wilcox returns from the police station, Margaret comes to talk to him, and he states that he would "prefer to discuss things outside… I am extremely tired,' said Henry, in injured tones. 'I have been walking about all the morning, and wish to sit down'" (Forster 239). Instead of retreating into the house, as he normally would do to have a discussion, Mr. Wilcox chooses nature over a cultured space to talk. What is more significant than Mr. Wilcox wanting to be outside is that he agrees to sitting on the grass: Margaret says, "Certainly if you will consent to sit on the grass" (Forster 239). Now he is not only in nature but is also connecting with it. He removes himself from a stance of superiority and brings himself down to the level of nature

by sitting on it. Margaret then gives him the keys to Howards End "'Here are your keys,' said Margaret. She tossed them towards him. They fell on the sunlight slope of the grass, and he did not pick them up" (Forster 239). In this passage, Mr. Wilcox gives up what he previously valued most. The keys symbolize the male domination of nature, and claiming of land as property. The men are depicted as prioritizing "title-deeds and doorkeys" (Forster 216) over nature, but in this moment, Mr. Wilcox gives the home back to nature by intentionally leaving the keys on the grass. Forster then describes Mr. Wilcox as being "broken" and "ended" stating "Henry's fortress gave way" (Forster 240). After Mr. Wilcox surrenders to nature, Margaret puts her fingers through the grass, which is portrayed as living: "The hill beneath her moved as if it was alive" (Forster 240). Throughout the novel, nature is described as having agency alongside humans, but in this instance nature has power over Mr. Wilcox. In fact, nature breaks him down so far that "he could bear no one but his wife… she took him down to recruit at Howards End" (Forster 240). Nature has "penetrated the depths of his soul" (Forster 131), and forced him to connect with the natural world by making him live at Howards End.

The epigraph to the novel "Only Connect…" while usually read in regard to human connections, when thought of in ecocritical thought, it can also be understood as a communion between the natural and human realms. Throughout *Howards End,* humanity and nature are aligned and have a balanced power relationship. But eventually, those who do not see nature as a living, powerful being of its own are ultimately forced to submit to nature's powers. Nature has the energy to "kill what is dreadful and make what is beautiful live" (Forster 215), and that's exactly what it does by the end of the novel. The natural world arguably denies the patriarchy any agency, and dominates the men in the novel the same way that they oppress nature.

Endnotes

1. See Phillip Gardner's "E. M. Forster and 'The Possession of England,'" which focuses on class and England as property in *Howards End*; Elizabeth Outka's "Buying Time: Howards End and Commodified Nostalgia," which discusses the property of Howards end, and country houses as commodities and nostalgic; and John Su's "Refiguring National Character: the Remains of the British Estate Novel," which discusses the crisis of inheritance in regard to English country estates in *Howards End.*

Works Cited

Forster, E. M. *Howards End.* Mineola: Dover Publications, 2002. Print.

Gardner, Philip. "E. M. Forster and 'The Possession of England.'" *Modern Language Quarterly* 42.2 (1981): 166-183. Web. 18 Nov. 2014.

Hanafy, Iman. "Nature, Women and the Ecotext: Self-Discovery in Emily Nasrallah's Short Stories 'The Cocoon' and 'The Butterfly.'" *Words For a Small Planet Ecocritical Views.* Ed. Nanette Norris. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013. 101-116. Print.

Kant, Immanuel. *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime.* Trans. John Goldthwait. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960. Print.

Miracky, James. *Regenerating the Novel: Gender and Genre in Woolf, Forster, Sinclair, and Lawrence.* New York: Routledge, 2003. Print.

Outka, Elizabeth. "Buying Time: Howards End and Commodified Nostalgia." *Novel: A Forumn on Fiction* 36.3 (2003): 330-350. *MLA International Bibliography.* Web. 17 Nov. 2014.

Su, John. "Refiguring National Character: the Remains of the British Estate Novel." *Modern Fiction Studies* 48.3 (2002): 552-580. *Project Muse.*

Trilling, Lionel. *E. M. Forster.* New York: New Directions Publishing Corp, 1964. Print.

An Essential Ambiguity: Racial Identity in Nella Larsen's *Passing*

Alexis Poe

Racial identity may on the surface seem to be a simple matter; people are simply born into their race and thus they should identify with that race. Oftentimes, though, it is not nearly that simple. Many things can affect how one identifies with one or even multiple races. One particular way is when a person is multiracial. *Passing* by Nella Larsen explores how race is defined in the presence of someone who is multiracial. Larsen shows that racial identity is ambiguous and how multiracial people are integral in challenging racial perceptions and labels in order to bring about understanding among the different races.

Larsen demonstrates early in *Passing* that racial identity can be ambiguous at times. Larsen gives no definite indication of the race of her characters in the first chapter and a portion of the second chapter. In the descriptions of Clare and her father found in the first chapter, we would not have known Clare was anything but white in her heritage. Irene's descriptions give focus on the light color of Clare's and her father's skin. The adjectives she uses do not only focus on their skin being light, but very light. Irene uses the words "pale small girl" and "bright hair" in regards to Clare and "pasty-white face" in her description of Clare's father (Larsen 5-6).

Where Irene's focus is on physical aspects of lightness, Clare's thoughts are more about her life as a whole. Clare states that " in this

pale life of mine I am all the time seeing the bright pictures of that other that I once thought I was glad to be free of" (Larsen 7). Clare's life passing as a white person is "pale" and unfulfilling to her; in her mind, pale is a thing that has little substance. Lightness in this context is not a positive thing; it signifies a shallowness that is no longer enough. Clare comes to appreciate the life she had as a black teenager and calls it "bright pictures" (Larsen 7). The juxtaposition of using the term "bright" to refer to her black heritage shows that Clare's understanding of the ambiguity of racial identity goes beyond the color of one's skin.

Larsen's physical description of Clare can be seen as symbolic of Clare's dual racial identity. Clare's dark eyes are a physical manifestation of her inner desire and identification with being black even though by all other appearances she is white. It shows that this desire is deeply ingrained in her and at the core of her being. Irene has a sense of understanding that Clare's dark eyes carry some significance. Irene states that "…for all their warmth, something withdrawn and secret about them… Surely! They were Negro eyes! mysterious and concealing. And set in that ivory face under that bright hair, there was about them something exotic" (Larsen 21). Clare's eyes are her one tangible connection with her black heritage. Even though Irene is unable to fully understand the depths of Clare's dual identity, she is able to observe this one aspect of it.

The exact definition of racial identity in Irene's mind is somewhat unclear to the reader. Irene does not hesitate to pass when she is mistaken as a white woman and taken to the Drayton Hotel (Larsen 8). She has no problem shedding her identity as a black woman in order to get away from the crowded street and to enjoy a glass of tea. Jennifer DeVere Brody states that "It is so natural for Irene to pass that she is not even conscious that she is doing so" (Brody 399). It is only when she thinks she is caught passing that she takes up her identity again as a black woman. The narrator states that "It wasn't that she was ashamed of being a Negro, or even having it declared. It was the idea of being ejected from any place […] that disturbed her" (Larsen 11). Irene is not against having a strong sense of racial identity, but she does not see it as a problem to set it aside for the sake of convenience.

Where Irene has no problem setting aside her racial identity for a little while, Clare purposefully chooses to identify with both her white and her black heritage. Clare cannot choose, nor is willing, to be solely one or the other; she is both. Clare declares to Irene that "You don't know, you can't realize how I want to see Negroes, to be with them again, to talk with them, to hear them laugh" (Larsen 51).

Catherine Rottenberg states that "It is not that Clare wishes to trade places with Irene; rather, Clare recognizes that other *configurations* of identification and 'desire-to-be' are possible" (her emphasis; Rottenberg 507). Clare realizes that in her life passing is not the only facet of her existence. She does have her life as a white woman, but she also realizes that there is still a part of her life that is fixed in her black heritage.

Clare's existence in-between the racial identities is a cause for much of the turmoil of Irene's "one or the other" mentality. Brody states that "Irene is threatened by Clare's ability to simultaneously imitate and denounce white society" (Brody 397). Irene's thoughts about passing are challenged by the straightforward talk between Clare and Gertrude. It is only after Clare says "of course, nobody wants a dark child" (Larsen 26) that Irene speaks of any strong identification with those who were too dark to pass. Irene had passed so naturally at the Drayton Hotel, but now she "was struggling with a flood of feelings, resentment, anger, and contempt, was, however, still able to answer as coolly as if she had not that sense of not belonging to and of despising the company in which she found herself…" (Larsen 26-27). The idea of being light enough to pass put so plainly before Irene became repulsive. Passing was an acceptable practice as long as it was not acknowledged. If it is acknowledged, it becomes clear that the boundaries between racial identities are not as solid as they appear to be on the surface. Carla Kaplan describes it as "the social and psychological vertigo caused when identity categories break down" (Kaplan ix). Irene tries to reassert her idea of singular racial identity in order to relieve her sense of vertigo.

The ambiguity of race is something Irene cannot tolerate. She is unable to comprehend those who do not identify as one or the other, and in doing so she becomes something she would otherwise hate. Kaplan states that "In her insistence that race is real and that one is 'bound' to it, Irene's language resonates not with the 'race men' of the Harlem Renaissance… but rather, with racist men like Lothrop Stoddard" (Kaplan xxi). Clare's challenging of racial identity is something that Irene feels uncomfortable with. Irene does not want Clare to cross the racial barriers once again and reconnect with the black community. Irene tells Clare that "you ought not come up here, ought not to run the risk of knowing Negroes" (Larsen 46). Irene's belief system does not allow her to appreciate Clare's desire to explore both areas of Clare's heritage. Irene only sees the value in keeping separate the racial identities. About Clare's desire to be with Negroes, Irene tells her that "even you must see that it's terribly

foolish, and not just the right thing" (Larsen 46). The idea of not choosing one over the other strikes Irene as wrong. She tries to justify it by saying "that it's dangerous and that you ought not to run such silly risks" (Larsen 46). But this excuse is no better. Irene trivializes the idea of connecting with multiple racial identities as being "silly risks" (Larsen 46), but the value of it is inherent to Clare since she is the embodiment of both identities.

Irene's identity as a person of single race leaves her with no understanding of the desire for one to connect with multiple racial identities, as in the case of Clare. Kate Baldwin states that "the notion of racial 'passing' disrupts both sides' attempts to assert a coherent racial self" (Baldwin 464). Clare's very existence is something that challenges Irene's sense of racial identity. Clare was also an outsider in regards to the white society in which she is living. A striking similarity between Irene and Clare's husband, John Belew, is that they cannot accept Clare into their ideas of what classifies race. Once Belew knew the truth about Clare's racial heritage and he confronted her, he was "speechless now in his hurt and anger" (Larsen 79). His own rigid definitions of race are destructive not only to Clare but to his own relationship with her.

Irene's speech on race tends to be somewhat convoluted once she is forced to explain it. The explanation she gives to Hugh Wentworth shows that racial identity is ambiguous, even though Irene tries to make it seem like a constant. Irene states that "There are ways. But they're not definite or tangible" of determining the race of a person (Larsen 55). Irene's feeling of being able to discern race on nothing more than a feeling is not so different from the ideas of white people that she scoffed at. Earlier Irene had said that "White people were so stupid about such things for all that they usually asserted that they were able to tell; and by the most ridiculous means, finger-nails, palms of hands, shapes of ears, teeth and other equally silly rot" (Larsen 10-11). Irene's arrogance is evident in her attitude towards the subject of determining race. In reality, her methods had no more merit than the ones she found ridiculous. In regards to both *Passing* and an actual court case in which the racial identity was a main issue, known as the Rhinelander case, Miriam Thaggert states that "Reading the woman's body in both the novel and the trial is a delicate act because of the uncertainty of 'race' of the light-skinned body" (Thaggert 510). Clare and Alice are both difficult to classify due to their multiracial heritages. They are contradictions to the previously held racial ideals; they simultaneously fit into racial categories and break racial categories, challenging racial categorization as a rigid practice.

Larsen's *Passing* gives readers a realistic look at how the lines between racial identities are often blurred. One side is neither better nor worse than the other, but a person should not hold too tightly to either. Multiracial people tend to be the physical manifestation of the blurred lines between races. They hold a unique perspective of racial identities since they are both a part of and separate from each race. Larsen demonstrated this with Clare being caught between the rigid ideologies of Irene and Belew. Although she may not have changed their beliefs, Clare had effectively shaken Irene's and Belew's previously held notions of race.

Works Cited

Baldwin, Kate. "The Recurring Conditions of Nella Larsen's *Passing*." *Norton Critical Edition*. Ed. Carla Kaplan. New York: Norton, 2007. 463-485. Print.

Brody, Jennifer DeVere. "Clare Kendry's 'True' Colors: Race and Class Conflict in Nella Larsen's *Passing*." *Norton Critical Edition*. Ed. Carla Kaplan. New York: Norton, 2007. 393-408. Print.

Kaplan, Carla. "Nella Larsen's Erotics of Race." *Norton Critical Edition*. Ed. Carla Kaplan. New York: Norton, 2007. ix-xxvii. Print.

Larsen, Nella. *Passing*. First published in 1929. *Norton Critical Edition*. Ed. Carla Kaplan. New York: Norton, 2007. Print.

Rottenberg, Catherine. "*Passing:* Race, Identification, and Desire." *Norton Critical Edition*. Ed. Carla Kaplan. New York: Norton, 2007. 489-507. Print.

Thaggert, Miriam. "Racial Etiquette: Nella Larsen's *Passing* and the Rhinelander Case."

Norton Critical Edition. Ed. Carla Kaplan. New York: Norton, 2007. 507-532. Print.

I am Jack's Gender: The Failure of Static Hypermasculinity in *Fight Club*

Zachary Nothstine

On the surface, the 1999 David Fincher film *Fight Club* is the story of a confused man who is trying to define himself to figure out what it means to be a man in the consumer culture in which he lives. The film rhetoricizes this quest for personal identity, using the language of reclamation. The unnamed narrator, usually referred to as Jack, seeks to reclaim a prior definition of masculinity that he perceives capitalism has made extinct. It is helpful to first define Jack's form of masculinity before going any further. Judith Halberstam's book *Female Masculinity* assists an understanding of what kind of masculinity is depicted in the film. Jack (re)constructs a concept of masculinity by doing what Halberstam says cannot and should never happen– "[reducing masculinity] down to the male body and its effects" (Halberstam 1). Since the male body is a limited, physical object and is easier to define than an abstract concept like masculinity, reducing the latter to the former makes it easier for Jack to define himself. This reductive definition of masculinity establishes a static gender identity rooted in the anatomical gender of a person's birth. If it is rooted in the innate, anatomically male gender, then hypermasculinity places itself in a position of essentialism, denying that there can be varying definitions of gender within the male body.

There are two other key elements to this hypermasculinity. First, if hypermasculinity is defined by the male body, it automatically

becomes exclusive, any person born anatomically female is alienated from it. This alienation is the reason that Halberstam says this reduction of masculinity cannot and should never happen, because it ignores the reality of alternative masculinities in non-male bodies, such as female masculinity, which is Halberstam's subject matter. Second, if masculinity is reduced to the "effects" of the male body, then it is tied to physical action. In the film, the form this physical action takes is literal violence, the Fight Club itself. In short, Jack's hypermasculine ideal is defined by three things, anatomical maleness, discrimination against femininity, and physical violence.

Jack's invented persona, Tyler Durden, embodies the hypermasculine ideal in *Fight Club*. Tyler is handsome, athletic, and muscular—the perfect visualization of a physically fit male. It is also important to notice that Tyler stays true to the earlier definition of hypermasculinity in three ways. One, he attempts to depict it as an essential, innate identity rooted in anatomical gender. Two, he discriminates against the feminine in order to define hypermasculinity. Three, he evidences extreme physical violence, often to the point of sadism. Interestingly, Tyler tries to impose this ideal on Jack who, despite being the same person is often resistant, and other men throughout the film. On the surface, Tyler succeeds impressively in redefining men and masculinity, considering the initiation of the Fight Club and the later creation of Project Mayhem. However, a deeper viewing of the film shows that the hypermasculine ideal is repeatedly undermined by both the Tyler persona and the Jack persona. In the end, the Tyler persona is destroyed, the hypermasculine ideal is proven fictitious, and Jack accepts the spectrum of various gender identities by accepting his own feminine masculinity and Marla's masculine femininity.

Judith Butler's "From Interiority to Gender Performatives" provides a framework for understanding how Tyler and Jack, as the same person, both embody and undermine the hypermasculine ideal. They can be perceived as "gender [parodies]" who "[reveal] that the original identity after which gender fashions itself is an imitation without an origin" (Butler 584). In embodying gender parody, Tyler's surface qualities align perfectly with hypermasculinity, while some less noticeable qualities fail to do so. Jack, on the other hand, can be seen trying to align with the hypermasculine ideal and failing in the attempt. For the most part, Jack resists and undermines the hypermasculine, and eventually, rejects it as a failure.

To start with, it is crucial to understand how Tyler attempts to support hypermasculinity. He first advances it by attempting to depict

it as essential to the completeness of anatomical males. He does this by using the concept of loss, evidenced in the first scene in Lou's tavern. Jack laments that, without his lost consumer goods, he can never "be complete." Tyler, responds to this sad idea by saying, "fuck off with your sofa units and Strinne green stripe patterns. I say, never be complete." Tyler thus separates his notion of completeness from external consumer goods like sofa units. Yet, despite saying "never be complete," Tyler revealed just moments before that he actually does have a notion of what loss would make a man incomplete, the loss of one's penis, when he proclaims that "it could be worse. A woman could cut off your penis while you're sleeping and toss it out the window of a moving car." Denis Hollier asserts, in Keith Reader's *The Abject Object,* that "it is the sex/sexual organ which causes a privileged wound in the integrity of being" (58). Hollier thus equates male emasculation to a kind of psychological damage done to the masculine gender identity. In the same way, Tyler's hypermasculine gender identity would be damaged by the physical loss of his penis. So, the astute observer sees that Tyler has constructed an essential/nonessential dynamic. Consumer goods, in being unnecessary for completeness, are not essential to man's gender identity. The penis, however, is both a physical organ and necessary for completeness, and is thus an essential component of a man's gender identity. In this way, Tyler again grounds hypermasculinity in the anatomical male body, and in so doing, asserts that hypermasculinity is a natural state of men.

The second way Tyler tries to embody hypermasculinity is by discriminating against the feminine. For all his desire to appear radical, Tyler subscribes to what Tim Edwards describes as "an outdated notion of the male sex role" that perceives of men and women as "naturally or fundamentally different" (18-20). Edwards refers here to the conflict in modern society between the ideal of gender equality, stemming from seeing men and women as fundamentally similar, and the patriarchally rooted forms of gender inequality, seeing men and women as fundamentally different, that still exist today. In this binary conflict, Tyler falls on the side of fundamental difference. Henry Giroux argues that Tyler's hypermasculinity "legitimize[s] unequal relations of power and oppression while condoning... violence against all that is feminine" (18). In a way, Giroux is correct. There is a kind of violence that takes place against the feminine, but Giroux interprets this violence as a hatred of the feminine when it is not. Tyler does not hate the feminine; he discriminates against it because he wants to define hypermasculinity in opposition to it.

The method through which Tyler enforces this separation returns to the effects of the male body, which Halberstam mentioned. The effects of the male body take the form of physical violence in the film itself and this leads to a mechanism for discrimination of the feminine. When Tyler asks Jack whether he has ever been in a fight, Jack responds, "no, but that's a good thing." To which Tyler responds, "No, it is not. How much can you know about yourself if you've never been in a fight?" With this statement Tyler imbues violence and fighting with enlightening revelatory power. Yet, it must be noted, Fight Club is only a club for men. Women are not allowed. Thus, Tyler entirely excludes women from the revelatory power of violence. Already having been excluded by grounding hypermasculinity in the male body, Tyler uses this mechanism to further separate the feminine from the hypermasculine. Keep in mind that Tyler does not assert that women do not have their own paths to enlightenment, only that they are completely distinct from the hypermasculine path of violence. Giroux explains that Tyler abhors the "feminization and domestication of men in a society driven by relations of buying and selling" (18). Here, Giroux makes the important observation that the film conflates consumerism, which is so obvious on the surface of the film, with feminization. In Tyler's mind, the definition of the hypermasculine, by excluding the feminine and consumerism, is a way to set men free to reclaim their "true" gender identities.

Having explored how Tyler's attitudes and behaviors advance the reductive masculine ideal, one can now examine how Tyler seeks to impose this ideal on others throughout the film, and then how this imposition reveals the discontinuities in Tyler's own ideals. Butler provides a mechanism for understanding how Tyler imposes his hypermasculinity, but this time, uses a model constructed by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*. In his book, Foucault challenges the language of internalization to create a model called "inscription" where "the strategy has been not to enforce a repression of their [the prisoners'] desires, but to compel their bodies to signify the prohibitive law as their very essence, style, and necessity" (Butler 582). In this model, inscription compels the prisoner's body to signify the law so that the citizen can then assimilate what is right and wrong using the prisoner's body as a text. Inscription reveals how Tyler's body, as the previously discussed embodiment of hypermasculinity which is analogous to the prohibitive law, becomes the text that the Jack persona and other men read in order to assimilate the right and wrong behaviors dictated by the hypermasculine ideal.

At the same time, inscription shows how Tyler himself undermines hypermasculinity and its imposition on others. Butler goes on to elaborate on Foucault's "prohibitive law" in terms of gender, asserting that the incest taboo and the homosexual taboo act as "the generative moments of gender identity" (582). The lack of homosexual behavior and the lack of incest construct the gender; thus, gender is generated not by the presence of a specific ideal, but by the lack of something, what Butler terms a "Signifying absence." (582) In Fight Club, lack is presented in a literal manner using consumer products. While ostensibly freeing Jack from the obsession of consumerism, Tyler actually creates an ideal for the Jack persona to follow that is composed entirely of "signifying absences." Jack's life after inventing Tyler is completely defined by the lack of things. The Jack persona believes that he lacks his own home. He lacks reliable electricity, television, a working refrigerator. Jack himself touches on the importance of lack when he says that "when a guy came to Fight Club for the first time, his ass was a wad of cookie dough. After a few weeks, he was carved out of wood." Carving requires the cutting away of layers of wood, and so the metaphor of carved wood is not a coincidence. Yet, Tyler combines this cutting away of consumer goods with the rhetoric of freedom by saying "it's only after we've lost everything that we are free to do anything." This, then, is how he undermines his own ideals.

A visual example of how his actions destabilize his rhetoric is noticeable in the difference between his clothes, which become more and more flamboyant during the film, and the bland black which the Project Mayhem men wear. As Stephen Brauer points out, "Tyler's fabulous threads—and their connotation of a deep commitment to style—subvert his message and reveal a hypocrisy in the anxiety with contemporary male roles" (110). The "deep commitment to style" which Brauer points out directly opposes the anti-consumerist rhetoric which Tyler espouses the entire film. Tyler's clothes grow progressively more glamorous throughout the film, evidencing more and more the depth of his hypocrisy and thus, the instability of the hypermasculine ideal. In the light of inscription, if Tyler is a text which Jack and the other men read in order to in turn signify the hypermasculine, he undermines their signification by failing to live up to the hypermasculine ideal himself.

So, if Tyler is a failed emblem of hypermasculinity, how is the men's belief in the hypermasculine ideal maintained? Butler again provides the answer. According to Butler, gender identity is constituted through "acts, gestures, and desire" that "produce the effect of an internal

core or substance" (583). She goes further though, explaining that, "although there are individual bodies that enact these significations by becoming stylized into gendered modes, this 'action' is a public action" (583). It is significant that the fifth rule that Jack and Tyler invent for Fight Club is "one fight at a time, fellows." This makes the fight function as the "public action" of gender that Butler refers to by making every other member watch that fight. Consequently, the watching of the performance accomplishes "the strategic aim of maintaining gender within its binary frame" (Butler 586). The intriguing part is that the performance of the fight in *Fight Club* accomplishes this locking in place of gender while hiding the fact that it does so behind false notions of its own radical nature. Olivia Burgess argues that the bodies of those who participate in Fight Club become "a potential site for exploring difference and creates an alternative to and a critique of the distorted narrative of dominant society" (265). The destructive nature of the fight, the bruises, the cuts, and broken bones pretend to enable exploration of "difference" but, in fact, these things are doing the opposite—constructing an illusory "internal core or substance" of hypermasculinity.

The Jack persona also undermines Tyler's ideal because, as Butler asserts "gender is also a norm that can never be fully internalized" (586). Despite Jack's seeming worship of the Tyler persona throughout the film, Jack never manifests discrimination against the feminine like Tyler does. This is contrasted in the ways the two personas treat Marla. The Tyler persona treats Marla as a sexual object, nothing more. She is something to be dominated, never trusted or talked to, and certainly not helped. At one moment, Tyler even offers to let Jack "finish her off" after a particularly loud bout of intercourse and then tells Marla to shut up when she speaks. He wants nothing from her but sexual satisfaction. Since Tyler's desire for independence from the feminine is well-established in the film, this comes as no surprise. On the other hand, while Jack's and Marla's interactions are extremely hateful at some moments, Jeannette Trotta points out that "Jack's destructive relationship with Marla derives from his own problems knowing who he is, not with any hatred of women" (137). He literally doesn't realize that he is having sex with her, in the Tyler persona, so many of their poor interactions result from this ignorance. In a later scene, Jack helps Marla by checking for breast cancer. While he is still not friendly, the moment is important because the reason he is touching her body is distinct from Tyler's reasons; he is being helpful, with no sexual undertones whatsoever. After Tyler threatens Marla, during the scene when Jack finally realizes he is Tyler,

Jack tries very hard to protect her from himself by sending her out of the city. Trying to convince her that he is sorry for his poor behavior, Jack says "I care about you and I don't want anything bad to happen to you because of me." Significantly, Jack takes responsibility for any of Tyler's behavior too. When Marla angrily points out, "You're Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Jackass," Jack simply replies, "I deserve that." He does not try to explain about his second personality or make excuses. He accepts the blame for both sides, symbolic of his acceptance of the totality of his gender identity.

By returning to the mechanism of the performative "public action of gender," one can understand not only how the illusion of hypermasculinity is maintained, but also how Jack eventually escapes Tyler's hypermasculine dominance completely. In the end, the hypermasculine Tyler persona is undermined by the fact that the public gender action of the fight must be perpetuated by repeated performances. Butler says that "the abiding gendered self will then be shown to be structured by repeated acts that seek to approximate the ideal of a substantial ground of identity, but which, in their occasional discontinuity, reveal the temporal and contingent groundlessness of this ground" (586). The "abiding gendered self" to which Butler refers, if constructed by the performance, is always in danger of becoming unstable because the performance invariably must pause. In order to be completely seamless, the performance would have to go on forever. These pauses in the performance of gender are analogous to the times when Jack is not at Fight Club. He lays bare the danger of Fight Club's discontinuity when he says that "who you were in Fight Club is not who you were in the rest of the world." This is perhaps even more clearly shown by the moment when Tyler walks in to the kitchen, Jack straightens his tie and narrates "most of the week we were Ozzie and Harriet." This scene demonstrates that Jack's hypermasculinity, while in the Jack persona, is not continuous; he has moments where "feminine" behaviors evidence themselves. Essentially this is the mechanism that leads to Jack's increasing divergence from Tyler's values and methods and, eventually, to his realization that Tyler is indeed a part of himself. Butler asserts that "the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found… in the possibility of a failure to repeat [the performance]" (Butler 586). Interestingly, once Project Mayhem begins, there is only one Fight Club sequence. The club takes a back seat to Tyler's ever more grandiose plans to lead some kind of a revolution. One can perceive this as the major reason why Jack begins to break free of Tyler's grip on him. The performance, and thus the temporal construction of the Jack persona's fictional hypermasculinity,

fails to be maintained and he begins to stray further from the ideal.

Jack's realization that he is Tyler is one of the deciding moments in the film; however, in terms of the interior gender journey Jack has been on throughout the film, the realization itself isn't the most important element. The most important element is Jack's acceptance of the feminine that crystallizes the instant Tyler threatens Marla. Jack doesn't completely reject the Tyler persona until this moment, when Tyler's violence explicitly threatens the feminine. "This is bullshit," Jack says, "I'm not listening to this." He cannot accept violence against the femininity he has come to accept. It is at this point, for the first time, that Jack begins to actively oppose Tyler's actions, first by seeking to expose Project Mayhem's plans to the police and then by risking his own safety to disarm the explosives. At long last, the final scene of the film depicts Jack's complete rejection of Tyler's hypermasculinity. He says, "my eyes are open" right before shooting himself in order to get rid of Tyler. With these words, he imbues his own kind of revelatory power on what he has undergone. His revelation destroys the hypermasculine ideal. In holding hands with Marla at the very end, Jack shows himself as having accepted his own feminine masculinity. He is no longer at war with himself and a part of him no longer discriminates against femininity. The false, performatively constructed gender which Jack struggles with throughout the film is no longer there and he is now free to represent "proliferating gender configurations outside the restricting frames of masculinist domination" (Butler 586). Intriguingly, the destruction of the buildings still takes place at the end of the film. Perhaps, the movie itself is declaring that Tyler's ideals were not so radical after all; the truly radical notion is an acceptance of all gender representations on an equal footing.

Any interpretation of *Fight Club* benefits from multiple viewings, critical opinions, and the depth of insight offered by literary theory. First, it helps to be able to define the form of masculinity which is celebrated on the surface of the film. In defining this hypermasculinity as a form of masculinity reduced to the anatomically male body, one can see that, in actuality, the film presents numerous ways in which hypermasculinity is destabilized. While Tyler tries to support the ideal by presenting it as a rigid, essential gender identity and by defining it apart from the feminine, he undercuts the ideal by imperfectly modeling it. Thus, since his body acts as the text upon which other men assimilate what is correct and incorrect hypermasculine behavior, the instability in his gender identity translates to instability in the gender identities of the other

men, including the Jack persona, who compose the system. The only way the hypermasculine ideal is maintained, then, is through the performative "public action" of the fight itself. When that performance fails to continue, Jack's gender identity diverges more and more from the ideal, until he finally rejects hypermasculinity altogether, and accepts the spectrum of gender variance. *Fight Club* can quite easily be viewed as celebration of misogynistic, masculine violence. Looked at in depth though, the film betrays itself, portraying the complexity of gender identity, the instability of the traditional male-female gender roles, and the somewhat radical notion of complete gender acceptance.

Works Cited

Brauer, Stephen. "'Men Is What We Are': *Fight Club,* the Authentic Masculine, and the Politics of Style." *Modern and Postmodern Cutting Edge Films.* Ed. Anthony D. Hughes and Miranda J. Hughes. Newcastle upon Tyne, England: Cambridge Scholars, 2008. 98-121. Print.

Burgess, Olivia. "Revolutionary Bodies in Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*." *Utopian Studies* 23.1 (2012): 263-280. Project Muse. Web. 6 Apr. 2014.

Butler, Judith. "From Interiority to Gender Performatives." *Global Literary Theory: An Anthology.* Ed. Richard J. Lane. New York: Routledge, 2013. 581-587. Print.

Edwards, Tim. *Cultures of Masculinity.* London: Routledge, 2006. eBook Collection (EBSCOhost). Web. 9 Apr. 2014.

Fincher, David, dir. *Fight Club.* Twentieth Century Fox, 1999. Film.

Giroux, Henry A. "Private Satisfactions and Public Disorders: *Fight Club,* Patriarchy, and the Politics of Masculine Violence." JAC 21.1 (Winter 2001): 1-31. Web. 6 Apr. 2014.

Reader, Keith. *The Abject Object: Avatars of the Phallus in Contemporary French Theory, Literature and Film.* Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2006. Print. 9 Apr. 2014.

Trotta, Jeannette. "Fighting Masculinity: Stereotyping as a Signifying Practice in *Fight Club.*" *Moderna Sprak* 98.2 (2004): 134-147. Print.

The Fordian Woman: Challenging Western Archetypes in *The Searchers*

Alyssa Faught

The western frontier is an archetypically masculine landscape. Having deliberately escaped the polite "graces of [eastern] civilization," the west is a place "'where men can be men'" (Warshow 37). Rugged and tough gunslingers, cattle ranchers and outlaws are welcome to the land of Monument Valley, the dusty desert, and the open blue sky. Yet, a man's not a man without a good woman by his side—so what then is the place of the *woman* in this profoundly male-dominated landscape? John Ford's *The Searchers* argues that not only is a woman the embodiment of domesticity within the western community, she is also a sign of hope, grace, and comfort in an otherwise bleak and barren world. Contrary to common depictions of passive femininity, Ford's western woman is a pioneer in her own right.

At her core, woman is the complete embodiment of the domestic sphere within the larger, opposing sphere of the desert. Traditionally, her duties are almost exclusively confined to the homestead. Women cook and clean and care for the children; they provide comfort for their husbands and a warm bed and meal for the road-weary traveler. This gender role is even at work among the strong, independent women of *The Searchers*. A prime example of this is when Laurie Jorgensen tells to Martin Pauley, her betrothed, about the responsibilities of a woman on the frontier. She passionately informs

him that a woman takes care of her man from the day she is born until the day she dies. Or perhaps, more accurately, until the day *he* dies.

Laurie continues to explain how women take care of all the men in the community; men come home from the desert, scarred both physically and emotionally, and the women must hold the family together. These words echo her actions, for while Laurie speaks, she busily attempts to bathe Marty, much to his chagrin. He is embarrassed and resists, but, as Laurie explains, he is *her* man. They have been promised to each other since childhood, and now that he has returned home (temporarily) from his mission to save Debbie, he is under her care and nothing will prevent her from performing her pre-ordained role. The bathing scene underscores how, in the West, home is an oasis in the desert and often the only comfort or community a pioneer will ever know. It also underscores the fact that women are the keepers of that community. By the same token, women who eschew their role as keeper of the home are looked down upon by the frontier community, as in the case of the "fallen woman" or prostitute (Warshow 37).

According to Durgnat and Simmon in their essay "Six Creeds That Won the West," a western woman can be divided into one of two categories: the schoolmarm, or the prostitute (70). In the literary genre, it is also known as the "virgin/whore" dichotomy. According to Western film scholar Robert Warshow, the "men [in the West] have *deeper* wisdom" that is evidenced by their sense of "organic loneliness," melancholic introspection, and battle (metaphoric and literal) with the land, while the women are fundamentally "children" (36-37), at least, the marriageable women are.

Often hailing from the East, the schoolmarm—the marriageable woman—"fail[s] to understand" her cowboy's ways. A civilized character, come to educate and "refine" the rugged people of the frontier, this woman is no stranger to the western genre (Warshow 37). Nevertheless, Warshow claims, she is childish, however well-intentioned she may be. The schoolmarm, for all her book-learning and ideals about morality and justice, cannot understand a western world. She is childish because she does not comprehend what a man must do to survive in the West, and so her beliefs are at constant odds with the choices he must make (to kill or not to kill—she would argue not; to skip town and continue with his loner ways or to stay—she would argue "stay," etc. etc.). As Durgnat and Simmon concur, "women who are hauled along are apt to find schoolmarmish excuses for the hero to shuck his manly, moral duties" (70). This kind of woman most certainly fulfills her role as a symbol of domesticity in the

bleak and barren terrain of the west, but she does not understand the very man—the cowboy—whose comfort she provides.

On the other hand, the woman who *does* understand the cowboy—the prostitute—is *unmarriageable* because of her checkered past and choice of profession (though all too often it is hardly a choice). She possesses cunning and tenacity equal to any man's. Like a cowboy, the prostitute has won her wisdom through experience; after all, one who must resort to prostitution to keep herself alive has probably seen and done a lot of things. And, like the lonesome cowboy Ethan Edwards, a Civil war deserter and ferocious Indian fighter, the prostitute is hardened by her lot in life. In return for her hardship, however, she has earned a "quasi-masculine independence" for herself, which is fundamental to her character: "nobody owns her, nothing has to be explained to her, and she is not, like a virtuous woman, a 'value' that demands to be protected" (Warshow 36-37).

Meanwhile, the self-righteous (married or unmarried, but still deemed 'virtuous') women around the prostitute are loved, but naïve. They rely on their husbands for protection. And the prostitute's "quasi-masculine" nature often gets her into trouble with them. In their eyes, the prostitute has no dignity, no respect, and no family of her own. She is very much a female cowboy, lonely and jaded. But there is still a key difference between them (besides the obvious issue of gender): a male cowboy can marry a virtuous woman and forsake his lonesome ways because "'when cowboys get married, they stop being cowboys'" (Durgnat and Simmon 70). But a prostitute is not afforded that same luxury because, in the western community at least, she can never wipe clean her tarnished past will forever be deemed unmarriageable.

A notable exception to this rule is a previous John Ford classic, *Stagecoach* (1939), in which the cowboy hero—played, of course, by John Wayne—falls in love and marries 'a woman with a past,' a prostitute named Dallas, who is actually much more respectable than all of her schoolmarm counterparts. As we see, Ford is no stranger to reworking western archetypes. Dallas is still treated poorly by most of her stagecoach companions, and her dramatic foil, the judgmental gentlewoman Mrs. Mallory, is treated like an innocent damsel in distress. Schoolmarms are patronized and the prostitutes are disdained, as is the custom in the western. Yet, John Ford's westerns seek to provide an alternative to the otherwise rigid virgin/whore dichotomy. As evidenced in *The Searchers*, Ford's version of a *true* woman of the west may have both the independence of a fallen woman, and the respectability of a virtuous one.

There is a surprising amount of strength in the women of *The Searchers*. They demonstrate their resilience throughout the film, perhaps most notably when Mrs. Jorgenson makes the 'Texicans' speech to Ethan and her husband, Mr. Jorgenson (He seems not to know the significance of his words when he recounts to Ethan: "she [Mrs. Jorgenson] was a schoolteacher, you know"). But long gone are the days of the self-righteous schoolmarm. This woman has lived as a pioneer's wife for years on the frontier; she has raised children on the land and watched one of them (Brad) die and another (Laurie) be left with no prospects. She has seen the massacre of the Edwards family, the threat of Indian attack looms constantly at her doorstep (literally), and she must helplessly stand by as one by one, the men in her life—the very ones to whom she has dedicated her life to taking care of—die. These toils, and the everyday toils of life on the frontier have hardened her, and her words resonate with the authority and wisdom which is usually reserved for the cowboys.

She commands respect, not only as a virtuous, hard-working woman, but also as an independent one. After all, so many good men are killed in their brutal environment that the pickings are slim for husbands; and the men that *do* stick around, Laurie's almost-husband Charlie McCorrie for example, are about as useful as a block of wood. Laurie must contend with this problem when Marty leaves for *five years* on his journey to rescue Debbie from the Comanches, and forsakes their engagement. Instead, he marries the Indian squaw, Look—a sticky situation which he did not even bother to explain to Laurie. All things considered, it would not be surprising if Mrs. Jorgenson had faced the very same situation, and was thus forced to marry Mr. Jorgenson, despite her own true desires. After all, Mr. Jorgenson is reminiscent of Charlie McCorrie, Laurie's second choice. Charlie is quite the simpleton; likewise, Mr. Jorgenson also appears dim-witted. His Dutch accent and light-hair and skin make him out to be a foreign man in foreign territory, almost a caricature, as opposed to the tanned, dark haired men Ethan and Marty, who fit in perfectly with their rough landscape. Their appearances denote capability, while Mr. Jorgenson's denotes comedy. What's more, he does not seem to recognize the gravity of the situation that his family faces, including Laurie's hopeless prospects. To the contrary, Mr. Jorgenson seems very light-hearted about the whole thing. And so it is largely up to Mrs. Jorgenson to take care of her family. She may be a virtuous woman, but her husband is *not* her protector. If anything, she seems to be his.

In the end, these woman represent hope. Their gentleness is both a retreat and a reprieve for the men of the frontier-lands; they

act as both pardoner and pardon, a mate with whom these men are allowed to show a softer, gentler side of themselves, a side which their harsh environment so often rejects. Jaded men are the burden of the western woman, but dead men are the only alternative.

A Ford western paints a much different portrait of the woman in the west. She is self-reliant, stubborn, competent, physically strong, and mentally tough. This Fordian woman is the definition of a pioneer wife, and she is not to be trifled with. In a Ford western, unlike those of his contemporaries, not *all* women are children. Childish women are foreign to the frontier just as schoolmarms are who have been sent from the East to bring "civilization" to the West. Although these women typical of the Western genre are idealized and often play the romantic leads, they are unlearned in the "practical" ways of living to survive (Warshow 37). In the eyes of the rough cowboy, this kind of woman is indeed a child—someone to be protected. But the Fordian western woman is a fighter, tough as nails, born on the land and raised in it (or otherwise immersed), strong as the men she raises, firm as the land she jointly cultivates.

Works Cited

Durgnat, Raymond and Scott Simmon. "Six Creeds That Won the Western." 1980. Rpt. in *The Western Reader.* Eds. Kitses and Rickman. New York: Limelight Editions, 1998. 69-84. Print.

The Searchers. Dir. John Ford. Perf. John Wayne. Warner Bros., 1956. DVD.

Warshow, Robert. "Movie Chronicle: The Westerner." 1954. Rpt. in *The Western Reader.* Eds. Jim Kitses and Gregg Rickman. New York: Limelight Editions, 1998. 35-48. Print.

Joyce vs. Rowling: Sexist or Feminist

Robert Durborow

James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series might seem an unlikely paring for literary comparison, particularly from a Feminist point of view. Such an undertaking might seem rather a daunting task; however a close study of these works reveals a few interesting similarities along with the more expected number of striking differences. Drawing from a variety of Feminist sources, including Cixous, Kristeva, and others, we may identify the stronger, more independent female characters in Rowling's, as well as Joyce's work, though eighty-one years separate the two stories. Joyce's text was first published in 1916, while the first installment of the *Harry Potter* series debuted in 1997 (Rowling). Both Joyce and Rowling created strong female characters who stand in stark contrast to their male counterparts, but there is a vast difference in male-female dynamics in these timeless works. An in-depth examination of both books reveals a significant amount of feminist literary progress in the treatment and status of female characters from Joyce to Rowling.

A proper examination of these two texts, from a feminist theory standpoint, requires a brief history of the Feminist movement. Contrary to popular belief, the women's movement of the sixties was by no means the inception of a quest for equality among men and women. As far back as 1701, sexually integrated jury cases were heard in Albany, New York, while the first state to pass women's suffrage

was Wyoming in 1869 (Legacy98.org). We may therefore assert that the Feminist movement, defined as "the doctrine advocating social, political, and all other rights of women equal to those of men" (Dictionary.com), was present in Joyce's day. The passage of time has seen significant gains for women toward greater respect, social and political standing, and many other areas, to include literature. The struggle, however, has been long.

To some it seems as if the conflict will go on forever. Hélène Cixous describes, "Such a display of forces on both sides that the struggle has for centuries been immobilized in the trembling equilibrium of deadlock" (1645). Herein, Cixous gives nod to the length of the "struggle" and the belief that the goals of Feminism have yet to be fully achieved. Joyce's writing supports both claims, if only by implication, but tends toward more restricting, sexist treatment of women as well as men prevalent in his day.

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man begins in an English "private school," which would be roughly equivalent to an American religious institution, such as a Catholic school. The school ranks the students, who appear to be all boys, in "lines" which are determined by age. The school staff hold religious titles or are supervised by those with such titles. In the first few pages of the work, a male dominated hierarchy is established in the use of such simple language as "prefects" and "captain of the third line" (Joyce 21). Further illustration of a masculine dominated society occurs on the following page when classmate Nasty Roche inquires of the main character, Stephen Dedalus, who his father is and what rank he possesses (22). Though Joyce's writing is at times difficult to follow, jumping from thought to thought, the trappings of a male dominated and fairly sexist environment are easily identified.

Another example of sexist behavior is manifest when another classmate, Wells, asks if Dedalus kisses his mother before bed at night. Stephen answers in the affirmative, and his fellow students laugh and ridicule him, perceiving this show of affection as a sign of weakness in Dedalus (26-27). Dedalus does not understand the reaction of his schoolmates.

Dedalus has a conversation in his mind, questioning why it should be wrong to act as he does, showing a more traditionally Feminist attitude toward his mother. Stephen considers his mother someone worthy of love and respect, and so is confused by the behavior of the other boys. The question the reader may derive from Joyce's writing is clarified by Dennis Sumara in *Of Seagulls and Glass Roses*:

> The way in which we come to know ourselves in the literary work is not embedded in the work, but rather emerges from our own interaction with the work. It is in this interactive process, manifested in the feeling of being lost, that the reader of the novel is sometimes able to find feelings, ideas, possible worlds that s/he did not have prior to the reading. (293)

Sumara clearly states that the reader brings his own baggage along for the literary ride. In the case of a current Feminist reading of the Joyce text, the reader arrives at her/his conclusions based on that particular reader's understanding of Feminism in its current state. A reader in Joyce's time might not find Dedalus' thoughts, or the actions of his schoolmates, sexist or unusual at all. The character Dante, however, presents a far more interesting discussion.

At Christmas dinner, Dante, a female, engages in a rather heated debate with the men in attendance. The men are speaking out against certain members of the clergy, whom Dante defends boisterously. While such a debate might be common and accepted as the norm in the twenty-first century, it was certainly less so eighty one years ago. Not only do the men in the conversation listen and respond to Dante's fiery speech, but Dedalus concludes Dante has made the better case (Joyce 38-44). Dedalus sees Dante as the victor of the argument, once again showing deference to the tutelage of a woman.

Cixous, in *The Laugh of the Medusa*, provides a vivid picture of what the Christmas scene in Joyce's story might have looked and felt like:

> Listen to a woman speak at a public gathering…She doesn't 'speak,' she throws her trembling body forward; she lets go of herself, she flies; all of her passes into her voice, and it's with her body that she vitally supports the 'logic of her speech. Her flesh speaks true. She lays herself bare. (1645)

We envision Dante speaking with the passion describe in these words. Perhaps that is why Dedalus mentally scores her cause the victor. Unfortunately, much of the remainder of Joyce's story is firmly fixed into the category of sexist.

All the respected leaders of the church in the story are male, as well as political leaders, and Irish patriots. From Parnell (Joyce 37), to Reverend William J. "Billy with the lip" Walsh (43), to Terrance Bellew MacManus (47), and more, all those in leadership positions of any kind are listed as men, with the notable exception of Queen Victoria. The majority of the women depicted it the Joyce text are presented in a firmly sexist light. The most notable of these is, perhaps, the

prostitute whom Dedalus encounters nearly halfway through the story.

Stephen is older at this point in the story and has begun to experience lust. In order to fulfill his physical greed, he "wanted to sin with another of his kind, to force another being to sin with him and to exult with her in sin" (98). As Dedalus locates a prostitute with which to fulfill his base desire, he passes fully into the realm of the sexist. His thoughts and actions turn from a semblance of respect for women to seeing them as objects. Fortunately, Stephen later repents until "He had no temptations to sin mortally" (139). The boy, now a young man, undergoes a change for the moral better and begins the search for something more.

Dedalus comes to terms with what he desires out of life as the story winds to a close. In the penultimate line of the work he states, "I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race" (224). Can this statement be interpreted as a desire toward a more Feminist outlook on life? Perhaps, perhaps not, but it is at the very least cause for hope.

Hope is the central message in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, written eighty one years after Joyce's text. It is a classic battle of good versus evil, with a significant number of strong female characters. Rowling's books are set in a magical version of an English "private school" much like Joyce's, but with some strikingly Feminist differences. Cixous admonishes women to:

> Write, let no one hold you back, let nothing stop you; not man; not the imbecilic capitalist machinery, in which publishing houses are the crafty, obsequious relayers of imperatives handed down by an economy that works against us and off our backs; and not *yourself*. Smug-faced readers, managing editors, and big bosses don't like the true tests of women—female sexed texts. That kind scares them. ("The Laugh of the Medusa" 1644)

Rowling embraces this advice with a mind that envisions strong, independent female characters and a pen that knows how to write them, though perhaps not as abruptly as Cixous suggests. Rowling submitted to several publishers before her books were picked up. One wonders how those who initially turned her down feel now.

In *Women's Time*, Julia Kristeva states and questions, "...women are writing, and the air is heavy with expectation: What will they write that is new?" (1576). Rowling's *Harry Potter* books provide one

answer. Rowling has penned one of the most widely read, bestselling series of all time, which appeals to young and old alike. Strong, authoritative, independent women characters abound in these works. Moreover, many of the male characters show women the respect and consideration they deserve. Hermione Granger, the main female character in the *Potter* books, is anything but a stereotypical (from a sexist point of view) female.

Far from shy, Hermione asserts her presence forcefully in the first book, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, quickly outstripping her fellow students (male and female) as the most intelligent student in the class. Harry describes her as, "the best in our year" to Horace Slughorn in Book 6 (70). Miss Granger solves the mystery of the beast that lurks in the Chamber Of Secrets, a basilisk, and how the creature travels about the school unseen in Book 2 (290-291), enabling Harry and Ron to locate the entrance to the Chamber and dispatch the beast.

Hermione becomes stronger and more independent as the series progresses. In the movie version of the seventh and final installment of the series, as Harry suggests Ron and he pursue the quest to destroy the evil Lord Voldemort alone, Ron states, "Are you mental? We wouldn't last two days without Hermione" (Grint). Hermione Granger is the only girl in the triad of heroes in the *Harry Potter* saga, but is by no means the only strong female character.

Professor Minerva McGonagall, Transfiguration teacher and Head of Gryffindor House, is written more as a force of nature than as a stereotypical schoolmarm. When he first meets this formidable woman "Harry's first thought was that this was not someone to cross" (Rowling 113). In Book 7, when the Battle of Hogwarts is imminent, it is McGonagall who takes charge and rallies the troops (595). In the battle itself, McGonagall does not cower or hide, but leads charge after charge, ultimately dueling with Voldemort (He Who Must Not Be Named) himself (735). The popular breast cancer awareness slogan, "Fight like a girl" springs to mind, and McGonagall does just that. McGonagall is also Deputy Head Mistress of the school and occupies the post of Headmistress for a time in Book 2, when the school governors remove Albus Dumbledore, and again in Book 6 after Dumbledore is killed (625). Clearly Harry's first impression of this woman is quite correct.

Rowling continues to write strong women into her books, including Nymphadora Tonks, a dark wizard catching Auror; Pomona Sprout, the Head of Hufflepuff House; Molly Weasley, mother of Ron and slayer of Bellatrix LeStrange (written as the most dangerous

Death Eater in Voldemort's dark wizard army). One of the School Champions in the race for the Triwizard Cup (Book 4) is Fleur Delacour of the Beauxbatons Academy (269). In creating these strong female characters, Rowling writes as Cixous admonishes, "Write! Writing is for you…" (1644). Judging from the overwhelming popularity of Rowling's books, writing is most definitely for her.

The *Harry Potter* books not only depict strong female characters, but respectful male characters. These male characters give up none of their masculinity, but treat their female counterparts as equals and partners. Albus Dumbledore, Headmaster of Hogwarts, chooses a strong woman to be his Deputy Headmistress, despite the availability of a number of qualified male candidates. It is clear Dumbledore considers McGonagall the best qualified individual for the job and McGonagall's performance of her required duties confirms Dumbledore's judgment. It is interesting to note that Rowling has stated she wrote Dumbledore, the most powerful and universally respected wizard of the age, as a gay man (Toppo). Albus Dumbledore acts as the hero's mentor throughout the series and guides Harry to accomplish his purpose.

Not all of Rowling's characters are strong women and respectful men. Some are written in what could be described as somewhat over-the-top stereotypical roles. Harry's Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon are overly obsessed with being "normal" and treat Harry like something smelly and sticky one might find affixed to the sole of a shoe. Harry's bedroom is described as "the cupboard under the stairs" (Rowling 19). Petunia and Vernon's treatment of Harry and his "abnormality" proclaim them as close-minded individuals, fearful of anything outside the stereotypical "normal" and more concerned with appearances than parenting.

Harry's Aunt Marge, whom Harry accidentally inflates in Book 3 (Rowling 29), is even worse than Harry's aunt and uncle, adhering to stereotypes (particularly the negative, sexist variety) like a drowning woman to a life preserver. Dolores Umbridge, who becomes a teacher and subsequently temporary Headmistress of Hogwarts in Book 5, rather make's Adolph Hitler look like a fluffy kitten. These characters appear written as contrasts or a sort of comic relief. All the characters in the *Potter* books combine to create an engaging story that has gained a great deal of attention worldwide, notwithstanding (or perhaps because of) its feminist leanings.

Julia Kristeva states that, "women's writing has lately attracted the maximum attention from both 'specialists' and the media" (1576). J. K. Rowling exemplifies this assertion. The fact that Rowling has

targeted a young audience adds to the subtle messages in these books. Instilling ideas of strong women and respectful men in the young will help create greater understanding and communication as these young people grow into adults. Kristeva talks of a third generation of women, a modern generation which are more enlightened than their predecessors:

> I am not speaking of a new group of young women (though its importance should not be underestimated) or another 'mass feminist movement' taking the torch passed on from the second generation. My usage of the word 'generation' implies less chronology than *signifying space*, a both corporeal and desiring space. So it can be that argued as of now a third attitude is possible, thus a third generation, which does not exclude—quite to the contrary—the *parallel* existence of all three in the same historical time, or even that they be interwoven one with the other. (1577)

This suggests a woman can be whomever and whatever she wishes, as it should be. Should she wish to be a mother and wife in the traditional sense, like Molly Weasley, she may do so. Perhaps she, like Hermione Granger, is, "…hoping to do some good in the world!' (Rowling 124). It may be that she aspires to become the next J. K. Rowling and write women and men as she sees them. This advice applies to men as well.

The main points Kristeva and Cixous make are not that far apart. Both advise women to discover who they are, whom they wish to be, and become those women. Cixous is fairly outspoken and abrupt with her advice, while Kristeva suggests repeatedly that the goals of women and the goals of men do not have to be as far apart as the two groups may have previously thought. The question that should be put to both women and men is: What will it take for both sides to be satisfied? Better still, as Kristeva implies, how do we do away with the idea that men and women are on opposite sides?

The *Harry Potter* books show men and women working together, sometimes well, sometimes not so well. In the end, however, evil is vanquished by a cooperative effort between men and women, as well as other creatures written to represent stereotypical racial and social prejudices of both men and women. Rowling's message is clear; understanding, respect, and cooperation between everyone involved will always win the day.

Though James Joyce's text makes some small effort toward

these same goals, the passage of time and changing of attitudes has accomplished considerably more. We must not consider the progress that has been achieved and will continue to be achieved as merely history or the passage of time. There is a good deal more to it than that.

Quoting *Finnegan's Wake*, Kristeva writes, "'Father's time, mother's species,' as Joyce put it; and, indeed, when evoking the name and destiny of women, one thinks more of *space* generating and forming the human species than of *time*, becoming, or history" (1565). Feminism is not a movement through time, but a generation of space for the continued social evolution of the human species. The achievements of the feminist movement are so far reaching and important to humankind that Kristeva further states:

> Here it is unnecessary to enumerate the benefits which this logic of identification and the ensuing struggle have achieved and continue to achieve for women (abortion, contraception, equal pay, professional recognition, etc.); these have already had or soon will have effects even more important than those of the Industrial Revolution. (1567)

Kristeva admonishes continued communication and understanding between men and women constitutes the most important advances we, as humans, can hope to achieve. In that light, the comparison of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* books provides hope for the future.

The obvious and vast differences in the literary depiction of both women and men in these two works show that the *space* of the human species has expanded significantly. The continued efforts of both sexes to increase this communal *space* can only increase understanding, respect, and acceptance among men and women.

Yes, progress has been made and space created, but there is more to be done. Until women and men share true acceptance, understanding, and respect of both differences and similarities, the journey is not complete. The comparison of Joyce and Rowling's texts illustrates what can be accomplished through literature in eighty one years. The next eighty one years can better the literary tradition and human condition even more. Let it be so.

Work Cited

Cixous, Helene. "The Laugh of the Medusa." Richter, David H. *The Critical Tradition.* Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007. 1627-1655. Print.

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1. Dir. David Yates. Perf. Rupert Grint. 2010. Film.

Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* Ed. R.B. Kershner. Second. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006. Print.

Kristeva, Julia. "Women's Time." Richter, David H. *The Critical Tradition.* Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007. 1563-1578. Print.

LLC, Dictionary.com. *Dictionary.com.* 2011. Web. 27 April 2011.

Project, Women's National History. *Legacy98.org.* 2002. Web. 28 April 2011.

Rowling, J. K. *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets.* New York: Scholastic, 1998. Print.

—. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows.* New York: Scholastic, 2007. Print.

—. *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire.* New York: Scholastic, 2000. Print.

—. *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince.* New York: Scholastic, 2005. Print.

—. *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban.* New York: Scholastic, 1999. Print.

—. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone.* New York: Scholastic, 1997. Print.

—. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone.* New York: Scholastic, 1997. Print.

Sumara, Dennis. "Of Seagulls and Glass Roses." Pinar, W. *Contemporary Curriculum Discourses: Twenty Years of JCT.* New York: Guildford, 1998. 289-311. Print.

Toppo, Greg. *USA Today.* 21 October 2007. 1 May 2011. Print.

Slipping the Noose: The Immortality of Human Experience in Philip Larkin's *The Less Deceived*

Zachary Nothstine

The Less Deceived is a distinctly modern book of poetry in which Philip Larkin presents the frustrations and disillusionments of modern man in beautiful imagery and stories. His narrators doubt and question the old structures in which humanity has traditionally found meaning, never fearing to voice their despair and worry over profoundly human concerns. Larkin's outlook is bleak, but often courageous because he refuses to equate the comfort value of an idea with its inherent truth value. If the evidence of God is lacking, he will not believe. If oblivion waits, crouched like a shadow to embrace him after death, he will face it, perhaps in despair, or perhaps in longing, but he will face it regardless.

Throughout this collection of poems, Larkin does face despair and disillusionment on many levels. He is disillusioned by human social values, such as love and family, and by religious institutions. The interesting points stem from what Larkin does with those feelings. Without denying his perception of bleak reality, in *The Less Deceived,* Larkin slips the constraining forces of social norms and biological death by creating a tapestry of human experiences through poetry. In doing so, he finds a way to leave something behind: an elevation of human experience as the most significant pursuit of humanity.

Larkin establishes his disillusionment with the world, and with the traditional structures in which people find comfort, numerous times in these works. He questions social values that are often taken for granted. In "Places, Loved Ones," the narrator rejects the normal sense of place and family. After stating he has never found a place to call home or a person who has any claim on him, he argues that, "To find such seems to prove / You want no choice in where / To build, or whom to love." Not only does the narrator reject these ideas about home and family, but in asserting that they take away choice, he imbues them with the power to imprison his will.

Examining other human interactions, the narrator in "Reasons for Attendance," reveals his disillusionment with romantic relationships, and even sex, when he says "but what / Is sex? Surely, to think the lion's share / Of happiness is found by couples - sheer / Inaccuracy, as far as I'm concerned." In both these instances, the narrator rejects social norms he observes as common in society and believes they can act as constraining forces.

Larkin then goes on to question religious systems and traditional concepts of an afterlife contained within those systems. In "Church Going," the narrator asserts the church "was not worth stopping for" and remarks "superstition, like belief, must die." He clearly places no stock in religion and he goes so far as to take for granted that eventually all churches will no longer be needed and "fall out of use."

In "Next, Please," the narrator describes the oblivion he perceives waits for humanity after death. He states that "Only one ship is seeking us, a black- / Sailed unfamiliar, towing at her back / A huge and birdless silence." For this narrator, there is only one universal—we will all die and face oblivion, with no afterlife and no "bird" to guide us. Furthermore, in going on to say "in her wake / No waters breed or break," the narrator emphasizes not only the oblivion awaiting us at death, but the impossibility of leaving anything of worth behind.

The careful reader will observe in these ideas two constraining forces which Larkin illustrates act upon man. First, the narrator believes normal human values, such as home, love, or God, limit him, which he seems determined not to allow. Second, man is constrained by the limits of reality; the certainty of his death, and the impossibility of any afterlife. The poem "Wires" strengthens and unites both of these constraining forces.

When they are young, steers "are always scenting purer water" outside their fence. However, when they "blunder up against the wires," "Young steers become old cattle," imprisoned by "Electric limits to their widest senses." The steers are imprisoned metaphorically

by both artificial norms and reality. The electric fence they run up against is artificial, thus their wariness of the fence is a learned behavior. The wires are conceptually linked to the first imprisoning force. At the same time, in associating biological age with the wires, the narrator implies mortal reality as a second constraint.

Clearly, in *The Less Deceived,* Larkin is dealing with some complex human issues–the bitterness of mortality, search for meaning, and disillusionment with human social and religious structures that attempt to create their own meaning. The question becomes; does the narrator simply surrender to this disillusionment and despair? The poem "Age" presents the answer to this question, when the narrator states he "needs must turn to know what prints [he] leave[s]." This image echoes the image in "Next, Please", in which the ship leaves no wake. Despite the earlier assertion, the narrator dares examine the possibility he can leave anything behind him. In looking, the narrator continues to question and demonstrates that he will not give in to despair at the thought of oblivion.

While his poetry is undeniably negative about life, Larkin does come to a sort of reconciliation with the human dilemma that pervades this book, a way to accomplish a semblance of longevity beyond one's own life. Again and again throughout the book, the narrator's attempt to portray experiences, whether their own or the people subject of the particular poem. Larkin presents a panorama of human experience through his poetry that has the power to outlive biological death.

The poem "Age" presents a helpful mechanism in a sort of inverse relationship. The narrator looks upon his age as "an inhabited cloud" and "a lighted tenement scuttling with voices." The image is that of the narrator inhabited by other people, other voices, other experiences. After looking at the prints he might leave behind, the narrator notes they might be "feet, / Or spoor of pads, or a bird's adept splay." The metaphor cuts in both directions: the experiences of others inhabit the narrator and the narrator inhabits the experiences of others. The overall effect is one of "slippage," in which detachment from normal associations allows one individual to figure for others, or one object to figure for a variety of emotions and anxieties.

We see Larkin slip into the experiences of others on multiple occasions throughout the book. In "Wedding-Wind," the narrator slips into the voice of a newly-married woman in order to examine the complexity of her emotions. The speaker notes the wind is "bodying-forth" her joy, referencing the "bodying-forth" Larkin does in this and all his poems. Another example occurs in the poem "Deceptions."

While the narrator does not assume the woman's voice in this piece, he starts the poem by identifying with her, saying that he can "taste the grief / Bitter and sharp with stalks." It is clear the woman Larkin speaks of was raped. In this instance he uses poetry in order to "body-forth" her pain. In both instances, the narrator inhabits the experience of another person while their experience inhabits the poem itself.

Larkin deepens this portrayal of human experience by slipping into a conceptual construct of the past as a story rather than memory. The detached nature of the past runs throughout the collection. The narrator demonstrates this in the poem "Whatever Happened?" The poem begins with "whatever happened" already "receding," giving the poem a universal applicability to virtually any event. The significance of this poem is the ever-widening gulf between person and event. A past event first becomes "kodak-distant" and later becomes simply "a latitude." The distance widens and by the end of the poem, the memory becomes merely a "yarn," whose origin cannot be properly traced and is thus detached from the individual who experienced it. It is interesting that this very distancing of the past allows it to figure or "body-forth" human experience in much the same way Larkin inhabits the experiences of others.

A strong example of this use of the past is found in "Lines on a Young Lady's Photo Album" in which the narrator explicitly separates past from present: "In every sense empirically true! / Or is it just *the past?*" The pictures in the photo album embody this detachment and allow for the narrator's grief at his inability to share that past.

The "slippage" mechanism is evident in Larkin's ideas about *names* in several poems in the collection, which also enriches the use of the past as figuring forth a variety of things. In "At Grass," the narrator describes two horses in a field simply grazing and resting. He notes they were race-horses "fifteen years ago" when "two dozen distances sufficed / To fable them." Connecting back to the idea of artificial norms, the horses' "names were artificed," a reference to the constructed nature of their "identities" from those racing days. Perhaps the most important point is that "Almanacked, their names live; they / Have slipped their names." Thus, while their names live as detached concepts, the horses are left in peace to live out their lives. Slipping one's name, then, is to detach the reality of oneself from the construct. One can observe that this is exactly what Larkin himself is doing in these collected works.

While he cannot literally "slip" his name, Larkin-as-narrator is a chameleon, identifying with and taking on the voices of numerous

narrators (who have also "slipped" their names) in order to "body-forth" the human experience. The names and stories within these poems outlive the biological death of Larkin and the subjects of the poems. A name itself is a separate construct, and is not subject to biological death. Thus, the subject of the photo in "Lines" becomes "clearer" as the years go by, the maiden name of the young woman in "Maiden Name" remains "vivid," and Larkin's poetry continues to be read long after he is gone.

In creating this panorama of human experience that outlasts him, Larkin has elevated the significance of human experience to an immortal, sacred, religious experience, the value of which he so obviously rejects. This goal is laid out in "Church Going" in which the narrator explains the one thing he appreciates about a church: that in its "blent air all our compulsions meet, / Are recognised, and robed as destinies. / And that much can never be obsolete." This is the answer to Larkin's disillusionment and feelings of imprisonment. In slipping into the experiences of others, Larkin frees himself. Concomitantly, human desire and human experience, as the narrator defines, are raised to the level of destiny and the value of those desires and experiences continue long after Larkin himself is gone.

In the end, Larkin not only faces the bleak nature of reality, but finds a way to create his own values, distinctly distanced from old systems like religion. Disappointed by the church, and home, and even familial and romantic love, Larkin finds solace in that "lifted, rough-tongued bell / (Art, if you like)." For Larkin, poetry is an active, freeing force, a way in which he can slip into and inhabit a wide variety of human experience. At the same time, he builds a foundation upon which his art may be observed, interpreted and enjoyed as an elevation of human emotion and experience and a celebration of our short lives as small pieces in the huge, varied, brilliant tapestry of life.

Works Cited

Larkin, Philip. *The Less Deceived.* 1955. London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 2011. Kindle file.

A Spiritual Journey: Faith and Puritanism in *Robinson Crusoe*

Melissa Van Treeck

In order to discover and define a personal sense of identity, one must undergo some representation of a spiritual journey. An important aspect of individual spirituality is religion and specifically the beliefs one chooses to follow. The natural progression in one's beliefs, which occurs as one grows closer to and learns more about God, life, and oneself, is depicted as a divine journey. Throughout the text of Daniel Defoe's, *Robinson Crusoe*, the religious representations that guide Crusoe along his holy journey serve to strengthen and test his faith in God and his religion. *Robinson Crusoe* illustrates the Christian belief system and ideology, particularly that of the Puritan religion.

In order to gain a good understanding of Robinson Crusoe's individual progression towards God, it is first necessary to understand the main beliefs of the Puritan religion. The focal point of this faith is in predestination, or the idea that everything is maintained and orchestrated by God, meaning that everything in this universe is His divine providence. The literal meaning of providence is foresight, and Puritans believed that God governed all living creatures as well as their actions in this universal government. The exact mode of this government is unexplained but it is certain that it is consistent and particular with God's own sense of glory and perfection. Some individuals were predestined to eternal life; others were destined

to eternal damnation with no exceptions. These views represented a people that were not equal or created on equal terms. God's maintenance and governance of all things was believed to extend to the natural world, the affairs of men, and individuals. Puritan belief was rooted in interpretations of the nature of man, free will, and predestination, which applies to all actions of man whether they are acts of sin or goodness. Sinful acts by individuals were believed to occur only by the permission of God, who has ultimate control over them. It was also believed that though these sinful acts could be overruled by good acts, they were also determined by God. It is important to understand that God was not seen as the cause or reason for sinful acts, nor did He approve of them. The only connection made with Sin was the limits, restraints, and overrule for good deeds that God controls.

Similarly, the Puritans were constantly active in learning about God's will and their relationship with Him. They believed that the most effective ways to learn about their Savior were through reading the Bible, listening to sermons, studying daily events, analyzing nature for signs, reviewing events in their lives for importance, and analyzing the state of their souls. These many different tactics helped followers to evaluate specific patterns of their lives as well as the spiritual meanings they encompassed. Another belief these followers emphasized was the mark of election or ability of being reborn. This marking was said to rehabilitate depraved human nature, but it was not a conversion that could stop individuals from relapsing into unregenerate behavior. Puritans believed that the perseverance and righteousness that can be attributed to individuals is only given and bestowed by God as He sees fit. They believed that the natural depravity that individuals undergo is the result of Adam and Eve's fall in the Garden of Eden and represents every person's corrupt and perverted ways. John Calvin, the interpreter of the Puritan belief system regarded this natural depravity as the reason individuals can be seen as "authors of their own destruction." Natural depravity was also seen as the cause of man's inability to exemplify acts of goodness; his mind only designs wicked and impure thoughts because of this original sin. The term 'regenerate' describes an individual who has undergone conversion, which is a gracious gift bestowed upon them by God. The belief that many people have is that they can convert at their own will and return to God, but Puritans believed that this notion was impossible, as it contradicts God's plan and glory. In order to receive God's grace, Puritans strove to lead a saintly life through sanctification. Lastly, the Puritan idea of vocation was understood as

God's call to social, economic, and religious roles or occupations. A believer's vocation was reached when he or she used specific talents given to him or her by God to wholeheartedly fulfill a calling.

Daniel Defoe beautifully represents all of these beliefs in the travel literature of *Robinson Crusoe*, in which he symbolically transforms an expeditious journey into a spiritual one. In relation to the Puritan belief of natural depravity, Robinson Crusoe is convinced that his rebellious behavior towards his father was his personal "original sin," for it leads to his exile on the island, mirroring Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden after their act of sin. In order for Crusoe to reach a state of repentance, he must acknowledge his own wickedness and dependence upon the Lord. The expression of gratitude and prayer is proven to be important when enduring God's challenges and experiencing His miracles, but it is not viewed as being sufficient in itself: individuals must experience repentance. Crusoe's mind is opened up to this idea when he is visited in a dream by a fiery and angelic figure. The figure comes to him during a feverish hallucination and asks him if he is ready to die for not having repented despite all that he had seen. This involvement allows Crusoe to admit his need for repentance and connects him with his spiritual consciousness in an experience of justification. Initially, the outlook that Crusoe had on the island was negative, as he played the role of a victim and blamed destiny for his bad situation. However, after experiencing repentance, he views the island more positively, complains less, and is more thankful of the miracles God shares with him, such as the sprouting of his grain. The exile provided by the shipwreck serves as a tool to deepen Crusoe's self-awareness and identity. The seclusion allows him to withdraw from the social world and turn inward, focusing on the spiritual. Thus, predestination is proven in this instance wherein sin is ironically justified: If Crusoe had never originally sinned when disobeying his father, he would never have learned about the necessity of repentance.

Also, the Puritan representation of sanctification is expressed through Crusoe's experience with repentance and his turning towards God. After the dream previously described, Crusoe decides to turn to prayer for the first time in his life and asks God to fulfill his promise, "that if I called upon Him in the day of trouble, He would deliver me" (Defoe 87). As Crusoe grows towards understanding God, he uses the Bible as structure, comfort, and guidance in God's word. This is the point wherein Robinson discovers that spiritual deliverance is much more important than the physical deliverance he had been craving on the island. He begins praying to God and simply asking for help,

not to be rescued from the island per se, saying, "Lord be my help, for I am in great distress" (Defoe 88). Puritans often practiced ways to make permanent records of events in their lives through writing in a journal or diary. It was important to keep track of every event that happened in an individual's life so that the happenings could be evaluated for spiritual meaning and patterns of significance. These practices stressed the key point in Puritan doctrines that every individual must keep careful watch of the state of their own soul. Crusoe exemplifies this belief by creating enthusiastic ways to keep track of his daily activities. Aside from keeping a journal to record the daily happenings, he constructs a makeshift calendar that does not mark the passing of days as normal but the days he has spent on the island. In this way Crusoe is able to make the calendar more personalized with his own being as the focal point. There is also a very specific Puritan belief that predestination can be proven through the duplication of significant events. In Crusoe's portrayal of this great providence, he notes that the date he ran away from his family is the same date he was captured and enslaved. Similarly, the day Crusoe survived the shipwreck and was cast ashore was also the day of his birth: "So that my wicked life and my solitary life begun both on a day" (Defoe 119). The Puritans believed in a correlation between these coincidences and justified them as the work of God's providence.

There are several other symbols of Christianity and the Puritan religion throughout the novel. The cross is a very religious symbol in many religions. Crusoe constructs a grand cross with his knife out of a wooden post and marks the passing of days on the island in capital letters, and chooses to place it where he first landed on the island. The cross can be viewed as not only a religious symbol but a connection with the social world which always needed to use dates and calendars. The large size and capital letters that Robinson makes on the cross serve as an illustration of the object's significance. According to Christianity, the cross represents new life along with the act of baptism. These representations can be seen through Crusoe's use of the cross to symbolize new existence, along with the shipwreck symbolizing the similarity to a baptism and submersion in water. Another spiritual symbol in this work is Crusoe's discovery of a footprint on the island. Here, it is evident that even though he has undergone conversion there will always be lapses back to the unregenerate state. The fear established after finding this footprint alludes to the idea that Crusoe's newly developed relationship with God may have been merely substitution of a human one. This event is very confusing, as Crusoe earlier expressed feelings of longing for

human companionship but is now shocked and interprets it very negatively like he did when first on the island. He initially believes the footprint to belong to the devil or an aggressor of some sort without even considering that it could be an angel or even a European commander who could help him. This almost shows that the real world may be the downfall of Crusoe's spiritual being, and that isolation might be his ideal and most beneficial state of mind.

Again, the Puritan illustration of providence is shown through events leading up to the shipwreck and even events on the island itself. While Crusoe experiences a realization of punishments and deliverances he has gone through, they guide him towards understanding to become aware of his sinfulness and move forward with conversion. In regards to the original sin that Crusoe acknowledged previously, he received warning from both his father and the captain of the first ship he went on against the rashness and danger of going out to sea. Ignoring the orders of these men is depicted as sinful because of the Puritan belief in authority. Both his father and the captain are figures of a providential social order implicated by God, and Crusoe's rebellion towards those individuals is seen as a denial of God. As a result, the shipwreck is believed to be one of the many punishments and deliverances bestowed upon Crusoe due to God's providence. When remembering his first voyage, Crusoe said, "… my conscience, which was not yet come to the pitch of hardness to which it has been since, reproached me with the contempt of advice and the breach of my duty to God and My Father" (Defoe 18). This quote alludes to the ideal of the father being regarded as God's deputy in the Puritan family structure, and disobeying his orders was almost equal to disobeying God. However, like the sin committed by Adam and Eve, disobedience followed restlessness and discontent with the station in which God assigned for Crusoe. One day, Crusoe felt the need to thank God for marooning him on the island because it saved his soul, but upon realizing the hypocrisy of the statement, he went on and "sincerely gave thanks to God for opening my eyes, by whatever afflicting providences, to see the former condition of my life, and to mourn for my wickedness and repent"(Defoe 142).

In addition to the shipwreck, Crusoe also believes to experience predestination often while on the island and in one particular event in regards to cannibalism. A repetitive theme in Crusoe's responses to events on the island indicates that whenever his physical survival is threatened, his religious practices tend to disappear. After Crusoe realizes that cannibals had visited the island, he becomes so enraged

with hate and fear that he spends years obsessing over ways to annihilate their people. Crusoe has a dream in which he rescues a cannibal and automatically assumes it's providential. This dream does become a reality, but when faced with the task, Crusoe does not respond in complete accordance with the dream. Initially, Crusoe does not take Friday into his home. In time Crusoe grows to treat Friday very fondly and shares with him the greatest expression of love as he converts Friday to his religion to save his soul, and he later even admits that Friday is the better Christian.

Likewise, there are many events in *Robinson Crusoe* that can be interpreted as Christian symbolism. In regards to the Puritan beliefs of recording all happenings to evaluate their spiritual and moral meanings, Crusoe's spiritual journey is represented by the symbolic nature of these experiences. Crusoe is thrown off course at sea, which is symbolic of a spiritual drift. Crusoe doesn't really have strong faith in God at this time, unlike he does after spending some time alone on the island. When Crusoe becomes enslaved, he also symbolically becomes enslaved by sin and the regret of disobedience towards his father and now of God. The next relative event Crusoe experiences is the shipwreck on the island he will inhabit. This can be a portrayal of a spiritual shipwreck in which Crusoe is torn about his decision, filled with regret, and hasn't furbished a relationship with God. Next, when he sets out to sea in a canoe, Robinson is almost swept out to sea. This alludes to the danger that lies in relying on oneself and the way in which he established his authority and became the master of himself, nature, and his fate without any help from God. Lastly, even though there can be several more symbols drawn from this work, the sprouting of the seeds of barley and rice can be seen as a reference to seeds of grace sprouting in Crusoe when he decides to admit his sinful ways and begin repentance.

Truly, Robinson Crusoe endures a very unique and challenging spiritual journey filled with both triumph and defeat. Even when Robinson was pouring his soul into performing proper repentance, he experiences lapses of judgment that are unrepentant. *Robinson Crusoe* can be categorized as a spiritual autobiography, meaning the work follows a specific pattern of events. These events are: the narrator sinning, ignoring God's warnings, hardening his heart to God, repenting as a result of God's grace and mercy, experiencing conversion, and achieving salvation. However, other events similar to all those included in a spiritual autobiography can be found in *Robinson Crusoe* as well. Moreover, religion is a general tool of literature not only because of its ideas, but because of the religious

works themselves. *Robinson Crusoe* was representative of the Christian religion of Puritanism and developed its action and characterization in coherence with their specific beliefs and values.

Ultimately, the journey that Crusoe chose out of disobedience to his father in favor of his own free will turned out to be the spiritual endeavor he needed to build a relationship with God. Through his accordance with God, he was able not only to use this to form his identity but also to bring him to ultimate salvation. Crusoe also represents an imperfect Christian who struggles with his faith and temptations through tests such as that of the cannibals' presence on the island in the novel. Throughout the text of Daniel Defoe's, *Robinson Crusoe*, the religious representations that guide Crusoe along his holy journey serve to strengthen and test his faith in God and his religion.

Works Cited

Defoe, Daniel. *Robinson Crusoe*. Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 1998. Print.

Smith, Christian. "Theorizing Religious Effects among American Adolescents." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42.1 (2003): 17-30. Web. 1 Dec. 2013.

Tao, the Environment, and Winnie the Pooh

Robert Durborow

Tao is. It's as simple as that. Tao, interpreted as "The Path", is a philosophy of the simplicity of being, acceptance of what is, and non-interference with the universe. Many environmental groups of today, such as Save Our Canyons in Salt Lake City, Utah (Dharmatech), agree with Taoist philosophy as it pertains to the preservation of wilderness areas and public lands. A. A. Milne's *Winnie the Pooh*, a popular children's character, enjoys a simple life of non-interference as well. With statements such as, "Always watch where you are going. Otherwise, you may step on a piece of the Forest that was left out by mistake" (Milne 1). Pooh himself might be classified an environmentalist of sorts, and certainly a Taoist. To compare Taoism and environmentalism with a famous children's book may seem odd, but there exists a definite connection. The simplistic Winnie the Pooh and his forest friends provide a basis for unhindered, honest comparison of these three very serious subjects. Allowing nature to simply be, without interference, is the essence of Taoist belief and an

enlightened approach to today's environmental concerns.

Lao Tzu, the founder of the Tao philosophy in the second decade of the fourth century and author of the *Tao Te Ching*, believed one should live in harmony with, and respect the sanctity of, nature. It is for man to exist within nature, in harmony with the universe around him, and to disrupt nothing. Another famous Taoist author and contemporary of Lao Tzu, Tao Chien, practiced what Lao Tzu preached by adopting the life of a rural farmer, though his family connections would have allowed him to serve as a government official. The simple life, or an existence in harmony with natural events, was preferable to a life of public service in Tao Chien's eyes (Owen 1358). Tao Chien wished to become one with Tao and felt that enlightenment could best be accomplished in a more rural setting. Many of today's environmentalists agree with the great Taoist teacher and poet, as does Winnie the Pooh.

Unfortunately, Tao Chien was forced to exist in the public world as well as his more idyllic private world. The poet recognized the realities and actualities of his world and strove to achieve balance between what he had to do to exist and the enlightened existence he so believed in and desired. Even the publication of his teachings to the world required a certain amount of compromise. In order for Tao Chien's poetry and prose to be disseminated to an audience, let alone the wide world, he had to send those writings to the larger world of which he disapproved (Owen 1359). Similar challenges face today's environmental community and the tranquil forest in which Winnie the Pooh resides.

Environmentalists must deal with more of the government bureaucracy and society than Tao Chien did. In order to effectively achieve the Taoist-like goals of non-interference, environmental organizations must deal with laws, courts, and the general citizenry, who often do not share their views or concerns (Dharmatech). The challenge posed to such groups seems somewhat more complex than it was to Tao Chien or Lao Tzu in their time. Non-interference with nature and the universe in today's society *requires* interference with just about everyone and everything else. The twenty-first century environmentalist often finds it necessary to "interfere" with land developers, engineers, the Bureau of Land Management, the National Forrest Service, and home owners. Where Taoism teaches non-action and non-contention, action and contention must be employed to preserve the natural order these environmentalists desire to protect. Herein lies a basic tenet of Taoism, as described in the second section of Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching*:

When the people of the Earth all know beauty as beauty,
There arises (recognition of) ugliness.
When the people of the Earth all know the good as good,
There arises (recognition of) evil.

Therefore:
Being and non-being interdepend in growth;
Difficult and easy interdepend in completion;
Long and short interdepend in contrast;
High and low interdepend in position;
Tones and voice interdepend in harmony;
Front and behind interdepend in company. (Tzu)

In light of this quote, the apparent conflict Tao Chien faced and with which today's environmental organizations contend proves no real conflict at all, but part of "The Path." Balance and enlightenment cannot be achieved unless imbalance and mental darkness exist first. The environment has no need for protection until someone or something threatens it. Winnie the Pooh understands this concept, and explains the complex philosophy of Tao in simpler language.

In *Pooh's Little Instruction Book*, Pooh says, "When looking at your two paws, as soon as you have decided which of them is the right one, then you can be sure the other one is the left" (Milne 4). This seems a very simple explanation in regard to the preceding quote from the second section of *Tao Te Ching*; it is, however, quite correct and beautiful in its simplicity. In essence, we must discover what is wrong to determine what is right. Therefore, when an environmental group identifies a threat to nature, intervention on *behalf* of Tao, of a balanced natural order, is clearly indicated. By the same token, Tao Chien saw the need to distribute his teachings to the world in order to spread the serenity of Tao. He used the only means available to do so, and thus did not disrupt Tao any more than required to achieve Tao's own worthy purpose. Tao is, and the true Taoist must deal with "The Path" as it is. Pooh, arguably the consummate Taoist, illustrates this concept on many occasions.

A. A. Milne's popular character uses plain language to simplify otherwise complex Taoist philosophical ideas. One of the more obvious of these is the belief of "do-nothing." Winnie the Pooh elucidates this approach in the statement, "Don't underestimate the value of Doing Nothing, of just going along, listening to all the things you can't hear, and not bothering" (Milne 1). Pooh effectively

instructs the reader to be aware of the natural world, to listen, see, and hear without disturbing. There is no attitude more appropriate to Taoism.

Lao Tzu describes the consideration of "do-nothing" in deeper detail than Pooh, but the meaning remains essentially the same. The following explanation is found in the sixty-third section of *Tao Te Ching*:

> Accomplish do-nothing.
> Attend to no-affairs.
> Taste the flavorless.
> Whether it is big or small, many or few,
> Requite hatred with virtue.
> Deal with the difficult while yet it is easy;
> Deal with the big while yet it is small.
> The difficult (problems) of the world
> Must be dealt with while they are yet easy;
> The great (problems) of the world
> Must be dealt with while they are yet small.
> Therefore the Sage by never dealing with great (problems)
> Accomplishes greatness. (Tzu)

In these few lines, Lao Tzu illuminates the simple words of A. A. Milne's loveable bear. The follower of Tao is admonished to be still and aware, to notice the flow of nature around him without interfering. By these actions, or lack thereof, the disciple may discern small problems and overcome them before they blossom into catastrophes. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. The difficult can be dealt with prior to becoming unmanageable. Lao Tzu instructs Taoists to become one with Tao, and Tao will instruct from there. This is the core and essence of Tao. The environmental group, Save our Canyons (SOC), seeks to educate and inform the general public of important environmental issues in much the same fashion (Dharmatech).

An excerpt taken from the SOC website describes the environment the organization desires to protect and reflects certain very Taoist principles, with which Pooh and Tao Chien might agree:

> One can hike into a beautiful cirque filled with snow, trees, and blue sky, in an hour and a half from the city's edge. It is the contrast between city and nature that Save Our Canyons strives to retain. The Wasatch Range is the inland equivalent

> of a seacoast which deserves protection for the wildlife habitat harbored within, as well as for the millions of people who will visit but do not remain. The idea of protecting our "mountain-coast" makes sense for the long-term good of Salt Lake City whose residents and visitors depend on these mountains as an escape from the hectic city life. (Dharmatech)

These statements contain an implied invitation to the reader to practice "do-nothing" by visiting and experiencing local nature firsthand. The need to protect these wild lands is succinctly outlined, ending with an actual invitation to a very Taoist escape from civilization. Lao Tzu, Tao Chien, and Pooh could not have phrased it better.

Lao Tzu, Tao Chien, today's environmentalist community, and Winnie the Pooh seem to agree that a simple life, striving for a balanced existence with nature and the universe, is a desirable circumstance and worthy purpose. It is difficult to disagree with such wise counsel. There is at least one Taoist belief that is universal in its truth. As penned by A. A. Milne in *Winnie the Pooh* and spoken through the furry lips of Pooh's wise companion, Eeyore, "A little Consideration, a little Thought for Others, makes all the difference" (Milne 1). May we all be as wise as that sage donkey in our treatment of others, their beliefs and concerns, our environment, and ourselves.

Works Cited

"Save our Canyons." *Dharmatec.* 1972. 15 October 2010. Web.

Milne, A. A. *All Great Quotes.* 2010. 15 October 2010. Web.

Owen, Stephen. "China's "Middle" Period." *Norton Anthology of World Literature, Volume B.* Ed. Lawall, Sarah. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2002. 1358-1359. Print.

Tzu, Lao. *Tao Te Ching.* (3rd or 4th century B. C.) trans. Lin Yutang (1948). Electronic Reserve (Southern Utah University). Print.

The Byronic Hero: Its Influences on 20th-Century Literature

Heather Owens

While the French Revolution and World War I are two very different events, they demonstrate a nearly identical effect on literature. Just as Lord Byron created a new hero archetype for his poetry in response to the French Revolution, so too did the "Lost Generation" of authors writing post World War I require a new kind of protagonist to confront a changing world. Lord Byron's invention of the "Byronic Hero" ushered in a new hero type who was different from the typical political or military heroes of Byron's non-Romantic contemporaries. Harold, from Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* Canto III, like the future literary protagonists he influences, represents an inability to connect with humanity and a subsequent isolation from them. What makes Byron's hero unique is the way in which he casts Harold's rejection from society not as a character flaw but, instead, an acceptable way of life for those who want to separate themselves from the calloused and weak, an attribute that would define future generations of this hero. Lord Byron's creation of this new character—the Byronic Hero—was born from a rejection of the typical Romantic heroes of the time and as a direct result of the political unrest in Europe, all of which serve as inspiration for the future "Lost Generation" of writers after World War I.

The "Byronic Hero" can be defined as someone who experiences frustration and defeat in both their public and private lives. He has

an inadequate fulfillment of heroic character in his public persona and in love, and an intellectual and spiritual culmination of heroic character through a sublime experience (Bruffee 671). In other words, while the Byronic Hero is a "hero" who has an unlikeable personality, he is nonetheless redeemed in the end and subsequently gains the audience's approval because of his abounding defeats. Consequently, the Byronic Hero is more relatable to audiences because he experiences a fall and redemption; the audience is able to relate to this fall and it gives them hope for their own redemption as well.

Lord Byron's *The Pilgrimage of Childe Harold* Canto III introduces Harold as a new type of Romantic hero. As Bruffee explains, "As the first step in this process, *Childe Harold* III may be seen to be Byron's preliminary attempt to create and delineate, as a truly meaningful character, the alienated hero" (670). Lord Byron gives an extensive overview of the Byronic Hero through the descriptions and actions of his character, Childe Harold, specifically within Canto III where, in its beginning, it is clearly announced that significant time has passed and that Harold has grown up: "Yet Time, who changes all, had altered him/In soul, and aspect as in age: years steal/Fire from the mind as vigour from the limb" (69-71). With this announcement, the reader is immediately informed that not only has time passed but Harold has changed as he has grown older. With these new changes, Harold reflects on his life and new role within society as a growing adult. After contemplating the idea of aging and his new responsibilities dictated to him by society, he quickly realizes himself to be, "the most unfit/Of men to be herd with man, with whom he held/Little in common" (100-103). Theses stanzas provide the first glimpses into Harold's internal isolation from his community. Byron uses the word "herd" to imply that humanity is like a group of sheep that have no minds of their own but simply follow a master around unquestionably. In addition to the sheep herding connotation, there is also the connection to the word "heard" to imply that Harold is silenced within his society. If he cannot be "heard with man," then he must live a silent life without opinion or thoughts. The pun pits society against the individual and invites the reader to support Harold's attempts to gain relevancy and independence.

It becomes immediately apparent that Harold is not the typical hero; instead of being praised for his wonderful qualities, he is alienated. While this is unusual for current-day heroes, it was even more unusual for the romantic heroes who praised intellect in conjunction with, not despite of, personal defects. Harold ponders

his isolating independence and finds that, although his mind sets himself apart from others, he enjoys his views and opinions: "Proud though in desolation—which could find/A life within itself, to breathe without mankind" (107-108). In other words, Harold chooses his own independence over fitting in with his contemporaries; he realizes that he cannot keep his individuality while also participating within his world of humanity. His alienation is so acute that Harold actually runs away: "Self-exiled Harold wanders forth again,/With nought of hope left" (136-137). Harold's sense of inadequacy compels him to go out and seek meaning for his life; if he cannot find meaning within humanity then he believes he can find it elsewhere.

Harold sets out to find a place of acceptance and has many experiences that force him to understand himself better as well as the world he is approaching. Throughout these experiences, though, he becomes only more alienated. Harold must therefore come to terms with the fact that he could be isolated from humanity permanently. This struggle between acceptance and alienation comes to a climax when he is looking at himself in the reflection of a lake and must justify his actions within himself:

> To fly from, need not be to hate, mankind;
> All are not fit with them to stir and toil,
> Nor is it discontent to keep the mind
> Deep in its fountain, lest it overboil
> In the hot throng, where we become the spoil
> Of our infection, till too late and long
> We may deplore and struggle with the coil
> In wretched interchange of wrong for wrong
> Midst a contentious world, striving where none are strong.
> (653-661)

Harold realizes here that he is separate from everyone and that he cannot change this fact. In his opinion, he separates himself from society not out of hatred for it but simply because he does not and will not fit in. While his separation has become a self-exile from the world, Harold does not find this self-exile to be wholly negative. According to Harold, because "all are not fit" to mingle perfectly within humanity it seems natural that he would be an outcast (654), and, consequently, he has no reason to work to fit in. Harold chooses to stay true to his own beliefs and morals rather than work to fit into a world where there is only "interchange of wrong for wrong" in the world were "none are strong" (660-661). Harold elevates his hero status with

this realization and exemplifies strength in leaving a weak society of wrongdoers in search for a society of strong people who live by their own beliefs. Harold's ultimate "redemption" allows the audience to praise him for his martyr-like rejection of the easy and immoral way of life for a more honest existence.

One possible historical figure who served as Byron's inspiration for the Byronic Hero is Napoleon Bonaparte. Like Napoleon, Harold is able to govern anything "but govern not thy pettiest passion" (339). While Harold is able to free himself from the world around him he is not able to change himself to fit within it. Then, once he achieves his freedom, he is still unable to be truly happy even though he is at peace with his decision. These Byronic heroes "aspire/Beyond the fitting medium of desire" but once that aspiration is kindled it becomes "quenchless evermore" (372-375). While both Napoleon and Harold reach their end goals—for Napoleon it is conquest, for Harold it is self-actualization—neither of them feel accomplished. This connection is made even more strongly because this Byronic Hero is a direct reaction to the failure of the French Revolution. Previously, military efforts were romanticized and held to a high honor. After the gore and horror of the French Revolution, many were disenchanted by the entire war process (Cantor 376). As a result, the idea of the "hero" changed from the military figure to the individual. Instead of praising those in charge of useless death and slaughtering, poets began praising the everyday man. As a result of this movement, it has become "quite natural that a poet should write, not about the heroic world of war and politics, but about his own feelings as a private individual" (Cantor 376). Byron's hero focuses not only on the private individual's feelings but also on his isolation and ability to live within a world created solely for himself.

With *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Lord Byron creates an alter ego of himself in order to live vicariously through another, and, in so doing, influences many future writers to do the same. As he explains in the opening of Canto III, he writes in order to "…create, and in creating live/A being more intense, that we endow/With form our fancy, gaining as we give/The life we image—even as I do now" (46-49). Ironically, Byron uses Childe Harold, an invented literary figure, to feel himself more alive. By creating this new hero, Byron succeeds in doing more than creating a figure for him to live through; he creates a new genre and world for other authors to explore. This idea of the "isolated hero" has inspired future writers and has given these individuals a home in 20th-century literature. Harold is unable to find acceptance within his own world, much like characters of the novels

from the "Lost Generation" did within their literary worlds. Harold, therefore, paves the way for acceptance of the "misfits" of society who do not fit in. Through the creation of Harold, Byron inspired others to reject a society in which they do not belong in favor of seeking their own personal solace.

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage was written in 1816, but the theme of isolation is one that has carried over to modern literature, such as those novels emerging from the "Lost Generation" over a hundred years later. The "Lost Generation" refers to a generation of writers who were so disenchanted from World War I that they moved to Europe to write and start their lives anew. While other writers were bringing focus back to the military hero, the Lost Generation writers wrote of the true horrors and evils of being a soldier in war. While the French Revolution and World War I are both very different events, both the Lost Generation and Byron had similar reactions to the "failed" uprisings and Byron's effect on the later writings of this generation is clear in both theme and use of the Byronic Hero.

The most notorious author of this "Lost Generation" is Ernest Hemingway. As a result of fighting in World War I, many of Hemingway's novels and short stories detail the daily lives of those affected by the War. Hemingway responded to the war much in the same way Byron responded to the French Revolution; both found the war to be a great failure and used writing to speak against it. The best example of Hemingway's protest is his semi-autobiographical novel *A Farewell to Arms.* During World War I it was very common for soldiers to be romanticized for their service and propaganda played heavily into this idea. Yet, the main character of *A Farewell to Arms*, Lieutenant Henry, runs away from the army. Not only does he abandon his post but he suffers no negative consequences as a result of his action. In a world where military service was considered the highest honor and duty, it is revolutionary that this character would abandon it. Much like Byron's hero, Hemingway's Henry is an ordinary person who, while he starts out as military personnel, does not display any military heroics.

Ernest Hemingway's contemporary, F. Scott Fitzgerald, was another prominent figure in the "Lost Generation." While Fitzgerald's most recognized work, *The Great Gatsby*, does not directly deal with the war, it still paints a prime example of a Byronic Hero. Nick Carraway moves to New York City and inadvertently rents a house next door to the infamous Jay Gatsby. While Jay Gatsby did fight in the war, that is barely a large point in his character. Jay Gatsby is romantic, narcissistic, persistent, and mysterious—all of which are both faults

as well as strengths. Nick is forced to play a supporting role in his own story of the horrible characters surrounding him, including his neighbor, cousin, girlfriend, and various other people. Jay Gatsby is a personification of the Jazz Age in the sense that he is very flashy and very rich, but the more the reader sees into his motivations and personalities the less appealing he becomes. At first, Nick and Daisy are charmed by Gatsby's freedom and richness, but then his desperate and self-centered personality breaks through and the characters are able to see his negative influences. While untraditional in the scheme of the Byronic Hero stereotype, Nick Carraway is born out of a direct influence of Lord Byron. When Daisy and her husband move away, completely ignorant of the deaths they have caused, Nick reflects on their way of life:

> "They were careless people, Tom and Daisy—they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made" (Fitzgerald 179).

This is Fitzgerald's way of rebelling against the Jazz Age. Much like Byron and Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald uses his narrative to create a relatable hero in order to underscore the harms of humanity and to justify man's desire to escape from it. Nick is much like Harold in this way; he is in the best part of society possible but does not have a voice to be "herd" within his society. Rather than continue playing into their game and trying to fit in—which would cause him to give up his entire worldview, especially on the importance of human life and relationships—he realizes that he cannot be a part of their community and instead chooses to isolate himself and leave his new home. Nick's "sublime experience" that causes his redemption is the death of Gatsby and the realization that he is the only one who truly cared for his friend. In this realization, he is able to define his own character and gain the strength to leave and find his own area of acceptance just as Harold in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.

While a few decades beyond the "Lost Generation" of World War I, the most recognized Byronic Hero of the second half of the twentieth century is J.D. Salinger's Holden Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye*. Holden begins his story at the point where he is kicked out of his expensive boarding school, Pencey Prep. It is at this point that Holden begins his own pilgrimage. Much like Harold, Holden struggles with both wanting to help mankind while simultaneously not fitting in.

Holden is growing up and must face the responsibilities of being an adult soon, and does not know how to make his morals fit into the world. As he says, "You can't find a place that's nice and peaceful, because there isn't any. You may *think* there is, but once you get there, when you're not looking, somebody'll sneak up and write 'Fuck you' right under your nose" (Salinger 264). While not as explicitly stated, Harold is facing the same struggles and has the same perceptions of his own world. Harold asks, "Is it not better, then, to be alone,/ And love earth only for its earthly sake?" (671-672). Similarly, Holden expresses to his little sister, Phoebe, that he is going to run away to live in the woods forever with only himself and nature. While Holden does not capitalize on this desire as Harold does, Holden still embodies all the other characteristics of a true Byronic Hero. Holden's "sublime moment" comes when he takes Phoebe to the carousel in Central Park. While he is standing there and watching her, he becomes overwhelmed with happiness that he could witness such happiness in another person. The reader is instantly drawn to his support because it is clear that, despite his inability to fit in, he is ultimately a good person and finds happiness in making others happy.

Holden Caulfield served as inspiration for other writers such as Kurt Vonnegut, Philip Roth, and Sylvia Plath—all of whom inadvertently have perpetuated the idea that Byron presented in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (Slawenski 179). Even though Byron is writing his poem two hundred years earlier, his themes have resonated with authors of the modern era and still influence writers today.

Works Cited

Bruffee, Kenneth A. "The Synthetic Hero and the Narrative Structure of Childe Harold III." *Studies in English Literature* 6.4 (1966): 668-78. *JSTOR*. Web. 31 Mar. 2014. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/449361>.

Cantor, Paul A. "The Politics of the Epic: Wordsworth, Byron, and the Romantic Redefinition of Heroism." *The Review of Politics* 69.3 (2007): 375-401. *JSTOR*. Web. 31 Mar. 2014.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. New York: Scribner, 2004. Print.

Salinger, J. D. *The Catcher in the Rye*. Boston: Little, Brown, 2001. Print.

Slawenski, Kenneth. *J. D. Salinger: A Life*. New York: Random House, 2010. Print.

Wilson, James D. "The Romantic Heroic Ideal." *Studies in Romanticism* 24.3 (1985): 430-33. *JSTOR*. Web. 13 Apr. 2014. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25600553>.

Wu, Duncan. *Romanticism: An Anthology*. Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2012. Print.

This publication was prepared by Northern Kentucky University. Northern Kentucky University is committed to building a diverse faculty and staff for employment and promotion to ensure the highest quality of workforce and to foster an environment that embraces the broad range of human diversity.

The university is committed to equal employment opportunity, affirmative action, and eliminating discrimination. This commitment is consistent with an intellectual community that celebrates individual differences and diversity as well as being a matter of law.

Discrimination against any individual based upon protected status, which is defined as age, color, disability, gender, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status, is prohibited. The university will provide equal opportunity to all employees in regard to salaries, promotions, benefits, and working conditions and will monitor these areas to ensure that any differences that may exist are the result of bona fide policies and procedures and are not the result of illegal discrimination. 47756

PENTANGLE

Established 1992

Editors
Joseph Brennan
Robert Durborow
Rebecca Hudgins
Dakotah Kennedy

Faculty Advisor
Dr. Andrea Gazzaniga

Cover Art
Castle on a Rock, Karl Friedrich Lessing

Sigma Tau Delta
Pi Omega Chapter

Department of Literature and Language
Northern Kentucky University
Highland Heights, KY 41099

FUNDING FOR THIS PROJECT PROVIDED BY
THE NKU UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH COUNCIL AWARD

Pentangle's History

Pentangle, a journal of student writing, debuted in 1992 at Northern Kentucky University and is sponsored by the Pi Omega chapter of Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society. Pi Omega is committed to the principles of Sigma Tau Delta, as stated in the international pledge: "To advance the study of chief literary masterpieces, to encourage worthwhile reading, to promote the mastery of written expression, and to foster a spirit of fellowship among those who specialize in the study of the English language and of literature."

The name of the journal, *Pentangle*, alludes to the famous image of the pentangle in the Middle English poem, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, where it is a symbol of truth and of the perfection to which Sir Gawain aspires. This association is consistent with the editorial staff's goal of honoring writing of merit in *Pentangle*. The Pentangle title also echoes the title of Sigma Tau Delta's official journal of student writing, *The Rectangle*.

Submission Guidelines

Pentangle solicits submissions of research papers, critical essays, and book reviews pertaining to all areas of literary studies in upper division and graduate courses. Book reviews should be for books written in the last two years. All submissions must be in MLA format (Gibaldi, et al., 7th ed.) and typed using Microsoft Word. Please email all submissions to pentangle@nku.edu. When submitting manuscripts, please include a bioline and contact information.

Editorial Policy

The editors reserve the right to edit submissions for grammar and punctuation. Editing may also include revisions to thesis statements and transitional sentences as well as other changes that clarify the work. The editors will work diligently to ensure that the integrity and intent of the author's work is maintained.

© Northern Kentucky University 2015

No part of this publication may be produced without the permission of the individual authors or artists.

Northern Kentucky University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution. The content, views, and unique perspectives reflected in the literary pieces and artwork contained herein are to be attributed to the writers, not the university, editors, or related sponsors.

Contents

"This place has wonderful powers:"
The Force of Nature in *Howards End*
Rebecca Hudgins 1

An Essential Ambiguity:
Racial Identity in Nella Larsen's *Passing*
Alexis Poe 11

I am Jack's Gender:
The Failure of Static Hypermasculinity in *Fight Club*
Zachary Nothstine 17

The Fordian Woman:
Challenging Western Archetypes in *The Searchers*
Alyssa Faught 27

Joyce vs. Rowling: Sexist or Feminist
Robert Durborow 33

Slipping the Noose: The Immortality of Human Experience in Philip Larkin's *The Less Deceived*
Zachary Nothstine 43

A Spiritual Journey: Faith and Puritanism in *Robinson Crusoe*
Melissa Van Treeck 49

Tao, the Environment, and Winnie the Pooh
Robert Durborow 57

The Byronic Hero:
Its Influences and Legacy on 20th-Century Literature
Heather Owens 63

"This place has wonderful powers:" The Force of Nature in *Howards End*

Rebecca Hudgins

Historically, in their relation to nature, women have been associated with the passive, fertile and beautiful, while men are not understood in relation to nature itself but by their ability to dominate and enhance the natural world. Immanuel Kant in his book, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime,* notes this distinction between the genders. He declares that women "…prefer the beautiful to the useful," while men are noble (77). Because of his claim about the sexes, Kant then argues that "the virtue of woman is a *beautiful virtue*. That of the male sex should be a *noble virtue*" (81). This active versus passive binary can be seen in relation to how men and women interact with nature: women enjoy nature for its beauty, while men act on nature to make it noble. E. M. Forster's novel *Howards End*, challenges the association of women and nature as being inherently passive and men as having the agency to aid nature to make it powerful and noble.

The majority of scholarship on *Howards End* is grounded in phallocentric understandings of women and nature that privilege the patriarchal social order. Lionel Trilling, in his influential book on E. M. Forster states, "*Howards End* is about England's fate…it asks the question, 'Who shall inherit England?'" (118). This critical interpretation of the novel leaves nature as a passive object that is not only being acted upon but also is being possessed by men as a

means to discuss larger issues in society. Trilling's interpretation of *Howards End* determined the direction of Forster's criticism, leading to understanding nature as property and an object in the novel. Contemporary scholarship typically focuses on the ways in which the house at Howards End symbolizes problems of class, society, property and nostalgia[1]. The issue with this line of critical thought is that it objectifies nature, and furthers the notion that the natural world is for men to control and own, which is precisely what Forster was writing against. Despite what present criticism of *Howards End* claims, nature is more than a passive backdrop to the actions of men in the novel; instead, nature itself is aligned with humanity and has agency along with the people in the novel. Rather than separating humans and nature in *Howards End,* nature needs to be seen as a force that brings people together.

A common theme running through *Howards End* is that of the intangible "inner life" and tangible "outer life." Women feel connected to the unseen, inner life which is more valuable than the life of "telegrams and anger" (Forster 18) that the men value. Forster presents nature as an all-encompassing unseen, inner life to which we belong: "Nature… comes nearer to us than do these crowds of men… the earth is explicable—from her we came and as a we must return to her" (Forster 77). It is important to read *Howards End* as understanding nature as an agent from which we came and as a sustainer of life rather than simply as a setting. But because men reject the natural world, they are not described as having the same sort of connection to the land that women have. This can be seen in contrast to the way Forster discusses London, which is a male realm: "London thwarted her; in its atmosphere she could not concentrate. London only stimulates, it cannot sustain…" (Forster 107). The male influenced city is not a place that breeds life, like the country. London is even described as seeming "satanic" (Forster 60). One of the goals of ecocriticism is to explain this unseen connection between humans and nature, and nature's influence on humanity. As Iman Hanafy points out, "Ecocriticism attempts a negotiation between the human and the nonhuman...Nature possesses a language of its own that enables it to communicate with people and consequently conditions what passes for knowledge about it." (Forster 94). It is important to read *Howards End* from a perspective that values the relationship between humans and the natural world rather than one that values the way men act upon the planet. When viewing nature as connected to humanity, the significance of the universe and its power become clear in *Howards End.*

In addition to nature interacting with people in *Howards End,* men and women in the novel also interact with nature. Women embrace and understand the power of nature. In fact, women, like Mrs. Wilcox, are so immersed in the universe that they are described as being nature: "She approached just as Helen's letter had described her, trailing noiselessly over the lawn, and there was actually a wisp of hay in her hands. She seemed to belong not to the young people and their motor, but to the house, and to the tree that overshadowed it" (Forster 14-15). Because the women embrace and acknowledge the forces of nature, they acquire power from the environment that gives them the ability to be all knowing. Forster outright claims the power that Mrs. Wilcox gains from nature: "She knows everything. She is everything. She is the house, and the tree that leans over it" (225). Mrs. Wilcox is not the only woman who crosses the boundary between human and nature; Miss Avery appears to be aware that Helen is pregnant, before anyone else does, which is seen by the way she set up Howards End with the Schlegels items. She places Tibby's old bassinette in the room that Helen had slept in four years ago, and when she shows Margaret around Howards End, she presents the room as "the nursery" (Forster 195). In addition, Miss Avery makes a prophecy to Margaret, which she ultimately fulfills, by claiming, "you think that you won't come back here to live, Mrs. Wilcox, but you will" (Forster 195). Miss Avery is also depicted as physically being one with nature: "Miss Avery crossed the lawn and merged into the hedge…" (Forster 225). The women in the novel align themselves with nature, and embrace the force of the natural world, instead of fighting against it.

Contrastingly, men attempt to resist and contain nature and often "mistake [its] fertility for weakness" (Forster 131). The only way that Mr. Wilcox can think about nature is in regard to his conquering it, which he notices is different to how the women view the natural world:

> "The world seemed in his grasp as he listened to the River Thames, which still flowed inland from the sea. O wonderful to the girls, it held no mysteries for him. He had helped to shorten its long tidal trough by taking shares in the lock at Teddington, and if he and other capitalists thought good, some day it could be shortened again" (Forster 93).

He sees nature as an object that is to be dominated and controlled, noting that he feels "the world seemed in his grasp," and that he and other capitalists know what is best for nature. Contrastingly,

when Margaret looks at the river, she sees it as living and powerful: "England was alive, throbbing through all her estuaries, crying for joy through the mouths of all her gulls, and the north wind with contrary movement, blew stronger against her rising seas" (Forster 126). Men are unable to see the living quality of the land and dismiss it as a powerless platform for them to build upon and control. Because the men want to use nature and enhance it, they are differentiated from the women, who see nature as a living being that has its own power. Forster describes these contrasting views about the environment by stating that there are "those who have moulded her and made her feared by other lands… [and] those who have added nothing at all to her power, but have somehow seen her, seen the whole island at once, lying as a jewel in a silver sea…" (Forster 126). Forster believes that nature has its own intrinsic power and that the connection the women have with it is superior to the way the men domineer over the earth.

Even though the men dismiss it, nature does have communicative power in *Howards End*. Forster shows the connection that humans have with nature through the wych-elm tree, which is described as,

> "… a comrade, bending over the house, strength and adventure in its roots, but in its utmost fingers tenderness, and the girth, that a dozen men could not have spanned…It was a comrade. House and tree transcended any similes of sex…yet they kept within the limits of human" (Forster 147).

In explaining the tree as having "strength" and "girth, that a dozen men could not have spanned," Forster shows the power that the tree holds. But, the tree is also noted as seeming human, which shows that it is more than just an object. Contemporary scholarship dismisses the tree as being merely a "space of fantasy" (Miraky 51), or is not discussed at all by critics. By ignoring or aligning the tree with the enchanted or mystical, it denies the tree any agency. In reality, this tree is an example of the power that nature holds in *Howards End*, but only the women are able to realize it. For instance, one of the more unusual characteristics about the wych-elm is the pigs' teeth that are stuck in the trunk of the tree. Mrs. Wilcox tells Margaret, "the country people put them in long ago, and they think that if they chew a piece of the bark, it will cure a tooth ache…it would cure anything once" (Forster 50). The women and country people are so invested in the powers of nature, that they join the human with the natural world to cure illnesses. This connection is significant, because while men are so cautiously avoiding nature, women go as far as to put nature in their

bodies to harness its power.

Despite the women being certain of the tree's energy, the men in the novel immediately dismiss any possibility that the wych-elm has any forces on its own. When Margaret asks Mr. Wilcox about the pigs' teeth in the tree, he says "*Pigs' Teeth?* And you chew the bark for a tooth ache? What a rum notion! Of course not!" (Forster 135). In fact, the only times that Mr. Wilcox even acknowledges the tree is in spatial relation to what he has done to Howards End. For instance, Mr. Wilcox tells Margaret that the garage was built "…to the west of the house, not far from the wych-elm" (Forster 51). Instead of acknowledging the tree as its own being, or discussing a connection he has had with the tree, he dismisses any agency that it has. Alternatively, Mr. Wilcox uses the tree as a landmark and backdrop to how he controls nature at Howards End. This is significant in contrast to the conversations the women have about the tree, which are much more humanistic. The women see the tree as a living being that they want to connect with, rather than being just a place marker.

While women and nature are in communion with nature, men are constantly at war with it, and the primary warzone is the house at Howards End itself. Mr. Wilcox believes that the house, and land is only valuable if something can be made from it, which is why he is always altering the house and property with his "improvements" (Forster 66). This contrasts to the way that Mrs. Wilcox views the home; to her the house "had been a spirit" (Forster 70). The types of "improvements" that the Wilcoxes make on the home and its land express a male anxiety about the untamed nature of wildlife, and the subsequent need to contain it. Mr. Wilcox when showing Margaret around the property says, "when I had more control I did what I could: sold two and a half animals, and the mangy pony, and the superannuated tools, pulled down the outhouses; drained; thinned out I don't know how many guelder roses and elder trees…" (Forster 147). Mr. Wilcox does what he can to separate the home from the natural world. He removes the outhouses, so that one does not have to use the restroom outside and he tries to tame down the wild shrubberies by "thinning them out." However, nature fights back to the changes that Mr. Wilcox makes to Howards End. At one point, Miss Avery is described as merging into a hedge on the farm that was "…an old gap, which Mr. Wilcox had filled up, had reappeared, and her track through the dew followed the path that he had turfed over when he improved the garden and made it possible for games" (Forster 225). Nature here is rejecting the "enhancements" that Mr. Wilcox made on the farm by undoing his work. Another example of

the natural world reacting against male control is when Mr. Wilcox comes to show Margaret Howards End for the first time, and the gate was left open, allowing a cow to stray in from the road and "spoil the croquet lawn" (Forster 142). These seemingly minor alterations of Mr. Wilcox's improvements are actually nature expressing its agency by challenging male domination of the land.

Even though men think that they can just dismiss the natural world's powers and subject it to patriarchal control, as *Howards End* shows, the men are less powerful than they think. There are many examples of men asserting their dominance over nature, and the environment reacting against it. The patriarchal world only finds nature important or valid when it is improved on by men or is productive. An example of this would be how the Wilcoxes use nature at Howards End for gaming and exercise, as described through a letter from Helen:

> Later on I heard the noise of croquet balls, and looked out again, and it was Charles Wilcox practicing; they are keen on all games. Presently he started sneezing and had to stop. Then I hear more clicketing, and it is Mr. Wilcox practicing, and then ''a-tissue, a-tissue": he has to stop too. Then Evie comes out, and does some callisthenic exercises on a machine that is tacked on to a greengage tree—they put everything to use—and then she says "a-tissue," and in she goes. And finally Mrs. Wilcox reappears, trail, trail, still smelling hay and looking at flowers. (Forster 2)

The Wilcox family does not enjoy nature for nature's sake as Mrs. Wilcox does; instead, they have to control nature, or make it productive. The men cannot connect with nature spiritually; they can only associate with nature when humans have used it. Unlike Mrs. Wilcox, who embraces the natural realm, the men use nature to play croquet, and Evie uses nature to exercise, as Helen says, "they put everything to use" (Forster 2). Even though this may seem like men dominating nature, the natural world is showing its force in this scene through the men's hay fever, which causes them to sneeze and have to retreat into the house. In fact, Margaret states, "the hay-fever is his [Mr. Wilcox's] chief objection against living…" (Forster 241) at Howards End. While the women think that the air "is delicious" (Forster 2) and Ruth is continually smelling the hay (Forster 2), as Miss Avery puts it, the men cannot "stand up against a field in June…" (Forster 196). The men, despite their insistence on controlling

nature, in some ways are forced to submit to it. Charles Wilcox realizes that this is a weakness and is defensive about it: "Charles Wilcox (the son here) has hay fever too, but he's brave, and gets quite cross when we inquire after it" (Forster 1). At the end of the novel when the women are participating in a beautiful pastoral scene, the men are tucked away in the house, on account of their hay fever: "the room was a little dark and airless; they were obliged to keep it like this until the carting of the hay" (Forster 244). The men want to think that nature is powerless against them, but in reality, nature holds the men hostage.

It is not until the end of the novel that nature asserts its power over the men that try to control it. After Charles kills Leonard, he tells his father about what happened. Mr. Wilcox sits in the garden, while they are discussing the incident and suddenly Mr. Wilcox seems to have undergone a change. Charles even notices this transformation: "Charles did not like it; he was uneasy about his father, who did not seem himself this morning. There was a petulant touch about him—more like a woman" (Forster 235-236). The reason Charles is concerned about his father is because he said that he would walk to the police station, rather than take a motor. Mr. Wilcox says, "I tell you I want to walk: I'm very fond of walking" (Forster 235). His desire to walk is unusual, because throughout the novel, cars are associated with men and culture. All of the men use cars to go everywhere, while the women despise motor rides. After riding in the car, Margaret states, "She felt the whole journey from London had been unreal. They had no part with the earth and its emotions. They were dust, and a stink, and a cosmopolitan chatter" (Forster 153). Because walking is more connected to nature than driving, walking is considered a female activity. This is the first time in the novel that Mr. Wilcox has had any desire to associate himself with the natural world. By sitting in the garden, nature connected with Mr. Wilcox and initiated a change in him.

After Mr. Wilcox returns from the police station, Margaret comes to talk to him, and he states that he would "prefer to discuss things outside… I am extremely tired,' said Henry, in injured tones. 'I have been walking about all the morning, and wish to sit down'" (Forster 239). Instead of retreating into the house, as he normally would do to have a discussion, Mr. Wilcox chooses nature over a cultured space to talk. What is more significant than Mr. Wilcox wanting to be outside is that he agrees to sitting on the grass: Margaret says, "Certainly if you will consent to sit on the grass" (Forster 239). Now he is not only in nature but is also connecting with it. He removes himself from a stance of superiority and brings himself down to the level of nature

by sitting on it. Margaret then gives him the keys to Howards End "'Here are your keys,' said Margaret. She tossed them towards him. They fell on the sunlight slope of the grass, and he did not pick them up" (Forster 239). In this passage, Mr. Wilcox gives up what he previously valued most. The keys symbolize the male domination of nature, and claiming of land as property. The men are depicted as prioritizing "title-deeds and doorkeys" (Forster 216) over nature, but in this moment, Mr. Wilcox gives the home back to nature by intentionally leaving the keys on the grass. Forster then describes Mr. Wilcox as being "broken" and "ended" stating "Henry's fortress gave way" (Forster 240). After Mr. Wilcox surrenders to nature, Margaret puts her fingers through the grass, which is portrayed as living: "The hill beneath her moved as if it was alive" (Forster 240). Throughout the novel, nature is described as having agency alongside humans, but in this instance nature has power over Mr. Wilcox. In fact, nature breaks him down so far that "he could bear no one but his wife… she took him down to recruit at Howards End" (Forster 240). Nature has "penetrated the depths of his soul" (Forster 131), and forced him to connect with the natural world by making him live at Howards End.

The epigraph to the novel "Only Connect…" while usually read in regard to human connections, when thought of in ecocritical thought, it can also be understood as a communion between the natural and human realms. Throughout *Howards End,* humanity and nature are aligned and have a balanced power relationship. But eventually, those who do not see nature as a living, powerful being of its own are ultimately forced to submit to nature's powers. Nature has the energy to "kill what is dreadful and make what is beautiful live" (Forster 215), and that's exactly what it does by the end of the novel. The natural world arguably denies the patriarchy any agency, and dominates the men in the novel the same way that they oppress nature.

Endnotes

1. See Phillip Gardner's "E. M. Forster and 'The Possession of England,'" which focuses on class and England as property in *Howards End*; Elizabeth Outka's "Buying Time: Howards End and Commodified Nostalgia," which discusses the property of Howards end, and country houses as commodities and nostalgic; and John Su's "Refiguring National Character: the Remains of the British Estate Novel," which discusses the crisis of inheritance in regard to English country estates in *Howards End.*

Works Cited

Forster, E. M. *Howards End.* Mineola: Dover Publications, 2002. Print.

Gardner, Philip. "E. M. Forster and 'The Possession of England.'" *Modern Language Quarterly* 42.2 (1981): 166-183. Web. 18 Nov. 2014.

Hanafy, Iman. "Nature, Women and the Ecotext: Self-Discovery in Emily Nasrallah's Short Stories 'The Cocoon' and 'The Butterfly.'" *Words For a Small Planet Ecocritical Views.* Ed. Nanette Norris. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013. 101-116. Print.

Kant, Immanuel. *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime.* Trans. John Goldthwait. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960. Print.

Miracky, James. *Regenerating the Novel: Gender and Genre in Woolf, Forster, Sinclair, and Lawrence.* New York: Routledge, 2003. Print.

Outka, Elizabeth. "Buying Time: Howards End and Commodified Nostalgia." *Novel: A Forumn on Fiction* 36.3 (2003): 330-350. *MLA International Bibliography.* Web. 17 Nov. 2014.

Su, John. "Refiguring National Character: the Remains of the British Estate Novel." *Modern Fiction Studies* 48.3 (2002): 552-580. *Project Muse.*

Trilling, Lionel. *E. M. Forster.* New York: New Directions Publishing Corp, 1964. Print.

An Essential Ambiguity: Racial Identity in Nella Larsen's *Passing*

Alexis Poe

Racial identity may on the surface seem to be a simple matter; people are simply born into their race and thus they should identify with that race. Oftentimes, though, it is not nearly that simple. Many things can affect how one identifies with one or even multiple races. One particular way is when a person is multiracial. *Passing* by Nella Larsen explores how race is defined in the presence of someone who is multiracial. Larsen shows that racial identity is ambiguous and how multiracial people are integral in challenging racial perceptions and labels in order to bring about understanding among the different races.

Larsen demonstrates early in *Passing* that racial identity can be ambiguous at times. Larsen gives no definite indication of the race of her characters in the first chapter and a portion of the second chapter. In the descriptions of Clare and her father found in the first chapter, we would not have known Clare was anything but white in her heritage. Irene's descriptions give focus on the light color of Clare's and her father's skin. The adjectives she uses do not only focus on their skin being light, but very light. Irene uses the words "pale small girl" and "bright hair" in regards to Clare and "pasty-white face" in her description of Clare's father (Larsen 5-6).

Where Irene's focus is on physical aspects of lightness, Clare's thoughts are more about her life as a whole. Clare states that " in this

pale life of mine I am all the time seeing the bright pictures of that other that I once thought I was glad to be free of" (Larsen 7). Clare's life passing as a white person is "pale" and unfulfilling to her; in her mind, pale is a thing that has little substance. Lightness in this context is not a positive thing; it signifies a shallowness that is no longer enough. Clare comes to appreciate the life she had as a black teenager and calls it "bright pictures" (Larsen 7). The juxtaposition of using the term "bright" to refer to her black heritage shows that Clare's understanding of the ambiguity of racial identity goes beyond the color of one's skin.

Larsen's physical description of Clare can be seen as symbolic of Clare's dual racial identity. Clare's dark eyes are a physical manifestation of her inner desire and identification with being black even though by all other appearances she is white. It shows that this desire is deeply ingrained in her and at the core of her being. Irene has a sense of understanding that Clare's dark eyes carry some significance. Irene states that "…for all their warmth, something withdrawn and secret about them… Surely! They were Negro eyes! mysterious and concealing. And set in that ivory face under that bright hair, there was about them something exotic" (Larsen 21). Clare's eyes are her one tangible connection with her black heritage. Even though Irene is unable to fully understand the depths of Clare's dual identity, she is able to observe this one aspect of it.

The exact definition of racial identity in Irene's mind is somewhat unclear to the reader. Irene does not hesitate to pass when she is mistaken as a white woman and taken to the Drayton Hotel (Larsen 8). She has no problem shedding her identity as a black woman in order to get away from the crowded street and to enjoy a glass of tea. Jennifer DeVere Brody states that "It is so natural for Irene to pass that she is not even conscious that she is doing so" (Brody 399). It is only when she thinks she is caught passing that she takes up her identity again as a black woman. The narrator states that "It wasn't that she was ashamed of being a Negro, or even having it declared. It was the idea of being ejected from any place […] that disturbed her" (Larsen 11). Irene is not against having a strong sense of racial identity, but she does not see it as a problem to set it aside for the sake of convenience.

Where Irene has no problem setting aside her racial identity for a little while, Clare purposefully chooses to identify with both her white and her black heritage. Clare cannot choose, nor is willing, to be solely one or the other; she is both. Clare declares to Irene that "You don't know, you can't realize how I want to see Negroes, to be with them again, to talk with them, to hear them laugh" (Larsen 51).

Catherine Rottenberg states that "It is not that Clare wishes to trade places with Irene; rather, Clare recognizes that other *configurations* of identification and 'desire-to-be' are possible" (her emphasis; Rottenberg 507). Clare realizes that in her life passing is not the only facet of her existence. She does have her life as a white woman, but she also realizes that there is still a part of her life that is fixed in her black heritage.

Clare's existence in-between the racial identities is a cause for much of the turmoil of Irene's "one or the other" mentality. Brody states that "Irene is threatened by Clare's ability to simultaneously imitate and denounce white society" (Brody 397). Irene's thoughts about passing are challenged by the straightforward talk between Clare and Gertrude. It is only after Clare says "of course, nobody wants a dark child" (Larsen 26) that Irene speaks of any strong identification with those who were too dark to pass. Irene had passed so naturally at the Drayton Hotel, but now she "was struggling with a flood of feelings, resentment, anger, and contempt, was, however, still able to answer as coolly as if she had not that sense of not belonging to and of despising the company in which she found herself…" (Larsen 26-27). The idea of being light enough to pass put so plainly before Irene became repulsive. Passing was an acceptable practice as long as it was not acknowledged. If it is acknowledged, it becomes clear that the boundaries between racial identities are not as solid as they appear to be on the surface. Carla Kaplan describes it as "the social and psychological vertigo caused when identity categories break down" (Kaplan ix). Irene tries to reassert her idea of singular racial identity in order to relieve her sense of vertigo.

The ambiguity of race is something Irene cannot tolerate. She is unable to comprehend those who do not identify as one or the other, and in doing so she becomes something she would otherwise hate. Kaplan states that "In her insistence that race is real and that one is 'bound' to it, Irene's language resonates not with the 'race men' of the Harlem Renaissance… but rather, with racist men like Lothrop Stoddard" (Kaplan xxi). Clare's challenging of racial identity is something that Irene feels uncomfortable with. Irene does not want Clare to cross the racial barriers once again and reconnect with the black community. Irene tells Clare that "you ought not come up here, ought not to run the risk of knowing Negroes" (Larsen 46). Irene's belief system does not allow her to appreciate Clare's desire to explore both areas of Clare's heritage. Irene only sees the value in keeping separate the racial identities. About Clare's desire to be with Negroes, Irene tells her that "even you must see that it's terribly

foolish, and not just the right thing" (Larsen 46). The idea of not choosing one over the other strikes Irene as wrong. She tries to justify it by saying "that it's dangerous and that you ought not to run such silly risks" (Larsen 46). But this excuse is no better. Irene trivializes the idea of connecting with multiple racial identities as being "silly risks" (Larsen 46), but the value of it is inherent to Clare since she is the embodiment of both identities.

Irene's identity as a person of single race leaves her with no understanding of the desire for one to connect with multiple racial identities, as in the case of Clare. Kate Baldwin states that "the notion of racial 'passing' disrupts both sides' attempts to assert a coherent racial self" (Baldwin 464). Clare's very existence is something that challenges Irene's sense of racial identity. Clare was also an outsider in regards to the white society in which she is living. A striking similarity between Irene and Clare's husband, John Belew, is that they cannot accept Clare into their ideas of what classifies race. Once Belew knew the truth about Clare's racial heritage and he confronted her, he was "speechless now in his hurt and anger" (Larsen 79). His own rigid definitions of race are destructive not only to Clare but to his own relationship with her.

Irene's speech on race tends to be somewhat convoluted once she is forced to explain it. The explanation she gives to Hugh Wentworth shows that racial identity is ambiguous, even though Irene tries to make it seem like a constant. Irene states that "There are ways. But they're not definite or tangible" of determining the race of a person (Larsen 55). Irene's feeling of being able to discern race on nothing more than a feeling is not so different from the ideas of white people that she scoffed at. Earlier Irene had said that "White people were so stupid about such things for all that they usually asserted that they were able to tell; and by the most ridiculous means, finger-nails, palms of hands, shapes of ears, teeth and other equally silly rot" (Larsen 10-11). Irene's arrogance is evident in her attitude towards the subject of determining race. In reality, her methods had no more merit than the ones she found ridiculous. In regards to both *Passing* and an actual court case in which the racial identity was a main issue, known as the Rhinelander case, Miriam Thaggert states that "Reading the woman's body in both the novel and the trial is a delicate act because of the uncertainty of 'race' of the light-skinned body" (Thaggert 510). Clare and Alice are both difficult to classify due to their multiracial heritages. They are contradictions to the previously held racial ideals; they simultaneously fit into racial categories and break racial categories, challenging racial categorization as a rigid practice.

Larsen's *Passing* gives readers a realistic look at how the lines between racial identities are often blurred. One side is neither better nor worse than the other, but a person should not hold too tightly to either. Multiracial people tend to be the physical manifestation of the blurred lines between races. They hold a unique perspective of racial identities since they are both a part of and separate from each race. Larsen demonstrated this with Clare being caught between the rigid ideologies of Irene and Belew. Although she may not have changed their beliefs, Clare had effectively shaken Irene's and Belew's previously held notions of race.

Works Cited

Baldwin, Kate. "The Recurring Conditions of Nella Larsen's *Passing*." *Norton Critical Edition*. Ed. Carla Kaplan. New York: Norton, 2007. 463-485. Print.

Brody, Jennifer DeVere. "Clare Kendry's 'True' Colors: Race and Class Conflict in Nella Larsen's *Passing*." *Norton Critical Edition*. Ed. Carla Kaplan. New York: Norton, 2007. 393-408. Print.

Kaplan, Carla. "Nella Larsen's Erotics of Race." *Norton Critical Edition*. Ed. Carla Kaplan. New York: Norton, 2007. ix-xxvii. Print.

Larsen, Nella. *Passing*. First published in 1929. *Norton Critical Edition*. Ed. Carla Kaplan. New York: Norton, 2007. Print.

Rottenberg, Catherine. "*Passing:* Race, Identification, and Desire." *Norton Critical Edition*. Ed. Carla Kaplan. New York: Norton, 2007. 489-507. Print.

Thaggert, Miriam. "Racial Etiquette: Nella Larsen's *Passing* and the Rhinelander Case."

Norton Critical Edition. Ed. Carla Kaplan. New York: Norton, 2007. 507-532. Print.

I am Jack's Gender: The Failure of Static Hypermasculinity in *Fight Club*

Zachary Nothstine

On the surface, the 1999 David Fincher film *Fight Club* is the story of a confused man who is trying to define himself to figure out what it means to be a man in the consumer culture in which he lives. The film rhetoricizes this quest for personal identity, using the language of reclamation. The unnamed narrator, usually referred to as Jack, seeks to reclaim a prior definition of masculinity that he perceives capitalism has made extinct. It is helpful to first define Jack's form of masculinity before going any further. Judith Halberstam's book *Female Masculinity* assists an understanding of what kind of masculinity is depicted in the film. Jack (re)constructs a concept of masculinity by doing what Halberstam says cannot and should never happen– "[reducing masculinity] down to the male body and its effects" (Halberstam 1). Since the male body is a limited, physical object and is easier to define than an abstract concept like masculinity, reducing the latter to the former makes it easier for Jack to define himself. This reductive definition of masculinity establishes a static gender identity rooted in the anatomical gender of a person's birth. If it is rooted in the innate, anatomically male gender, then hypermasculinity places itself in a position of essentialism, denying that there can be varying definitions of gender within the male body.

There are two other key elements to this hypermasculinity. First, if hypermasculinity is defined by the male body, it automatically

becomes exclusive, any person born anatomically female is alienated from it. This alienation is the reason that Halberstam says this reduction of masculinity cannot and should never happen, because it ignores the reality of alternative masculinities in non-male bodies, such as female masculinity, which is Halberstam's subject matter. Second, if masculinity is reduced to the "effects" of the male body, then it is tied to physical action. In the film, the form this physical action takes is literal violence, the Fight Club itself. In short, Jack's hypermasculine ideal is defined by three things, anatomical maleness, discrimination against femininity, and physical violence.

Jack's invented persona, Tyler Durden, embodies the hypermasculine ideal in *Fight Club*. Tyler is handsome, athletic, and muscular—the perfect visualization of a physically fit male. It is also important to notice that Tyler stays true to the earlier definition of hypermasculinity in three ways. One, he attempts to depict it as an essential, innate identity rooted in anatomical gender. Two, he discriminates against the feminine in order to define hypermasculinity. Three, he evidences extreme physical violence, often to the point of sadism. Interestingly, Tyler tries to impose this ideal on Jack who, despite being the same person is often resistant, and other men throughout the film. On the surface, Tyler succeeds impressively in redefining men and masculinity, considering the initiation of the Fight Club and the later creation of Project Mayhem. However, a deeper viewing of the film shows that the hypermasculine ideal is repeatedly undermined by both the Tyler persona and the Jack persona. In the end, the Tyler persona is destroyed, the hypermasculine ideal is proven fictitious, and Jack accepts the spectrum of various gender identities by accepting his own feminine masculinity and Marla's masculine femininity.

Judith Butler's "From Interiority to Gender Performatives" provides a framework for understanding how Tyler and Jack, as the same person, both embody and undermine the hypermasculine ideal. They can be perceived as "gender [parodies]" who "[reveal] that the original identity after which gender fashions itself is an imitation without an origin" (Butler 584). In embodying gender parody, Tyler's surface qualities align perfectly with hypermasculinity, while some less noticeable qualities fail to do so. Jack, on the other hand, can be seen trying to align with the hypermasculine ideal and failing in the attempt. For the most part, Jack resists and undermines the hypermasculine, and eventually, rejects it as a failure.

To start with, it is crucial to understand how Tyler attempts to support hypermasculinity. He first advances it by attempting to depict

it as essential to the completeness of anatomical males. He does this by using the concept of loss, evidenced in the first scene in Lou's tavern. Jack laments that, without his lost consumer goods, he can never "be complete." Tyler, responds to this sad idea by saying, "fuck off with your sofa units and Strinne green stripe patterns. I say, never be complete." Tyler thus separates his notion of completeness from external consumer goods like sofa units. Yet, despite saying "never be complete," Tyler revealed just moments before that he actually does have a notion of what loss would make a man incomplete, the loss of one's penis, when he proclaims that "it could be worse. A woman could cut off your penis while you're sleeping and toss it out the window of a moving car." Denis Hollier asserts, in Keith Reader's *The Abject Object,* that "it is the sex/sexual organ which causes a privileged wound in the integrity of being" (58). Hollier thus equates male emasculation to a kind of psychological damage done to the masculine gender identity. In the same way, Tyler's hypermasculine gender identity would be damaged by the physical loss of his penis. So, the astute observer sees that Tyler has constructed an essential/nonessential dynamic. Consumer goods, in being unnecessary for completeness, are not essential to man's gender identity. The penis, however, is both a physical organ and necessary for completeness, and is thus an essential component of a man's gender identity. In this way, Tyler again grounds hypermasculinity in the anatomical male body, and in so doing, asserts that hypermasculinity is a natural state of men.

The second way Tyler tries to embody hypermasculinity is by discriminating against the feminine. For all his desire to appear radical, Tyler subscribes to what Tim Edwards describes as "an outdated notion of the male sex role" that perceives of men and women as "naturally or fundamentally different" (18-20). Edwards refers here to the conflict in modern society between the ideal of gender equality, stemming from seeing men and women as fundamentally similar, and the patriarchally rooted forms of gender inequality, seeing men and women as fundamentally different, that still exist today. In this binary conflict, Tyler falls on the side of fundamental difference. Henry Giroux argues that Tyler's hypermasculinity "legitimize[s] unequal relations of power and oppression while condoning... violence against all that is feminine" (18). In a way, Giroux is correct. There is a kind of violence that takes place against the feminine, but Giroux interprets this violence as a hatred of the feminine when it is not. Tyler does not hate the feminine; he discriminates against it because he wants to define hypermasculinity in opposition to it.

The method through which Tyler enforces this separation returns to the effects of the male body, which Halberstam mentioned. The effects of the male body take the form of physical violence in the film itself and this leads to a mechanism for discrimination of the feminine. When Tyler asks Jack whether he has ever been in a fight, Jack responds, "no, but that's a good thing." To which Tyler responds, "No, it is not. How much can you know about yourself if you've never been in a fight?" With this statement Tyler imbues violence and fighting with enlightening revelatory power. Yet, it must be noted, Fight Club is only a club for men. Women are not allowed. Thus, Tyler entirely excludes women from the revelatory power of violence. Already having been excluded by grounding hypermasculinity in the male body, Tyler uses this mechanism to further separate the feminine from the hypermasculine. Keep in mind that Tyler does not assert that women do not have their own paths to enlightenment, only that they are completely distinct from the hypermasculine path of violence. Giroux explains that Tyler abhors the "feminization and domestication of men in a society driven by relations of buying and selling" (18). Here, Giroux makes the important observation that the film conflates consumerism, which is so obvious on the surface of the film, with feminization. In Tyler's mind, the definition of the hypermasculine, by excluding the feminine and consumerism, is a way to set men free to reclaim their "true" gender identities.

Having explored how Tyler's attitudes and behaviors advance the reductive masculine ideal, one can now examine how Tyler seeks to impose this ideal on others throughout the film, and then how this imposition reveals the discontinuities in Tyler's own ideals. Butler provides a mechanism for understanding how Tyler imposes his hypermasculinity, but this time, uses a model constructed by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*. In his book, Foucault challenges the language of internalization to create a model called "inscription" where "the strategy has been not to enforce a repression of their [the prisoners'] desires, but to compel their bodies to signify the prohibitive law as their very essence, style, and necessity" (Butler 582). In this model, inscription compels the prisoner's body to signify the law so that the citizen can then assimilate what is right and wrong using the prisoner's body as a text. Inscription reveals how Tyler's body, as the previously discussed embodiment of hypermasculinity which is analogous to the prohibitive law, becomes the text that the Jack persona and other men read in order to assimilate the right and wrong behaviors dictated by the hypermasculine ideal.

At the same time, inscription shows how Tyler himself undermines hypermasculinity and its imposition on others. Butler goes on to elaborate on Foucault's "prohibitive law" in terms of gender, asserting that the incest taboo and the homosexual taboo act as "the generative moments of gender identity" (582). The lack of homosexual behavior and the lack of incest construct the gender; thus, gender is generated not by the presence of a specific ideal, but by the lack of something, what Butler terms a "Signifying absence." (582) In Fight Club, lack is presented in a literal manner using consumer products. While ostensibly freeing Jack from the obsession of consumerism, Tyler actually creates an ideal for the Jack persona to follow that is composed entirely of "signifying absences." Jack's life after inventing Tyler is completely defined by the lack of things. The Jack persona believes that he lacks his own home. He lacks reliable electricity, television, a working refrigerator. Jack himself touches on the importance of lack when he says that "when a guy came to Fight Club for the first time, his ass was a wad of cookie dough. After a few weeks, he was carved out of wood." Carving requires the cutting away of layers of wood, and so the metaphor of carved wood is not a coincidence. Yet, Tyler combines this cutting away of consumer goods with the rhetoric of freedom by saying "it's only after we've lost everything that we are free to do anything." This, then, is how he undermines his own ideals.

A visual example of how his actions destabilize his rhetoric is noticeable in the difference between his clothes, which become more and more flamboyant during the film, and the bland black which the Project Mayhem men wear. As Stephen Brauer points out, "Tyler's fabulous threads—and their connotation of a deep commitment to style—subvert his message and reveal a hypocrisy in the anxiety with contemporary male roles" (110). The "deep commitment to style" which Brauer points out directly opposes the anti-consumerist rhetoric which Tyler espouses the entire film. Tyler's clothes grow progressively more glamorous throughout the film, evidencing more and more the depth of his hypocrisy and thus, the instability of the hypermasculine ideal. In the light of inscription, if Tyler is a text which Jack and the other men read in order to in turn signify the hypermasculine, he undermines their signification by failing to live up to the hypermasculine ideal himself.

So, if Tyler is a failed emblem of hypermasculinity, how is the men's belief in the hypermasculine ideal maintained? Butler again provides the answer. According to Butler, gender identity is constituted through "acts, gestures, and desire" that "produce the effect of an internal

core or substance" (583). She goes further though, explaining that, "although there are individual bodies that enact these significations by becoming stylized into gendered modes, this 'action' is a public action" (583). It is significant that the fifth rule that Jack and Tyler invent for Fight Club is "one fight at a time, fellows." This makes the fight function as the "public action" of gender that Butler refers to by making every other member watch that fight. Consequently, the watching of the performance accomplishes "the strategic aim of maintaining gender within its binary frame" (Butler 586). The intriguing part is that the performance of the fight in *Fight Club* accomplishes this locking in place of gender while hiding the fact that it does so behind false notions of its own radical nature. Olivia Burgess argues that the bodies of those who participate in Fight Club become "a potential site for exploring difference and creates an alternative to and a critique of the distorted narrative of dominant society" (265). The destructive nature of the fight, the bruises, the cuts, and broken bones pretend to enable exploration of "difference" but, in fact, these things are doing the opposite—constructing an illusory "internal core or substance" of hypermasculinity.

The Jack persona also undermines Tyler's ideal because, as Butler asserts "gender is also a norm that can never be fully internalized" (586). Despite Jack's seeming worship of the Tyler persona throughout the film, Jack never manifests discrimination against the feminine like Tyler does. This is contrasted in the ways the two personas treat Marla. The Tyler persona treats Marla as a sexual object, nothing more. She is something to be dominated, never trusted or talked to, and certainly not helped. At one moment, Tyler even offers to let Jack "finish her off" after a particularly loud bout of intercourse and then tells Marla to shut up when she speaks. He wants nothing from her but sexual satisfaction. Since Tyler's desire for independence from the feminine is well-established in the film, this comes as no surprise. On the other hand, while Jack's and Marla's interactions are extremely hateful at some moments, Jeannette Trotta points out that "Jack's destructive relationship with Marla derives from his own problems knowing who he is, not with any hatred of women" (137). He literally doesn't realize that he is having sex with her, in the Tyler persona, so many of their poor interactions result from this ignorance. In a later scene, Jack helps Marla by checking for breast cancer. While he is still not friendly, the moment is important because the reason he is touching her body is distinct from Tyler's reasons; he is being helpful, with no sexual undertones whatsoever. After Tyler threatens Marla, during the scene when Jack finally realizes he is Tyler,

Jack tries very hard to protect her from himself by sending her out of the city. Trying to convince her that he is sorry for his poor behavior, Jack says "I care about you and I don't want anything bad to happen to you because of me." Significantly, Jack takes responsibility for any of Tyler's behavior too. When Marla angrily points out, "You're Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Jackass," Jack simply replies, "I deserve that." He does not try to explain about his second personality or make excuses. He accepts the blame for both sides, symbolic of his acceptance of the totality of his gender identity.

By returning to the mechanism of the performative "public action of gender," one can understand not only how the illusion of hypermasculinity is maintained, but also how Jack eventually escapes Tyler's hypermasculine dominance completely. In the end, the hypermasculine Tyler persona is undermined by the fact that the public gender action of the fight must be perpetuated by repeated performances. Butler says that "the abiding gendered self will then be shown to be structured by repeated acts that seek to approximate the ideal of a substantial ground of identity, but which, in their occasional discontinuity, reveal the temporal and contingent groundlessness of this ground" (586). The "abiding gendered self" to which Butler refers, if constructed by the performance, is always in danger of becoming unstable because the performance invariably must pause. In order to be completely seamless, the performance would have to go on forever. These pauses in the performance of gender are analogous to the times when Jack is not at Fight Club. He lays bare the danger of Fight Club's discontinuity when he says that "who you were in Fight Club is not who you were in the rest of the world." This is perhaps even more clearly shown by the moment when Tyler walks in to the kitchen, Jack straightens his tie and narrates "most of the week we were Ozzie and Harriet." This scene demonstrates that Jack's hypermasculinity, while in the Jack persona, is not continuous; he has moments where "feminine" behaviors evidence themselves. Essentially this is the mechanism that leads to Jack's increasing divergence from Tyler's values and methods and, eventually, to his realization that Tyler is indeed a part of himself. Butler asserts that "the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found… in the possibility of a failure to repeat [the performance]" (Butler 586). Interestingly, once Project Mayhem begins, there is only one Fight Club sequence. The club takes a back seat to Tyler's ever more grandiose plans to lead some kind of a revolution. One can perceive this as the major reason why Jack begins to break free of Tyler's grip on him. The performance, and thus the temporal construction of the Jack persona's fictional hypermasculinity,

fails to be maintained and he begins to stray further from the ideal.

Jack's realization that he is Tyler is one of the deciding moments in the film; however, in terms of the interior gender journey Jack has been on throughout the film, the realization itself isn't the most important element. The most important element is Jack's acceptance of the feminine that crystallizes the instant Tyler threatens Marla. Jack doesn't completely reject the Tyler persona until this moment, when Tyler's violence explicitly threatens the feminine. "This is bullshit," Jack says, "I'm not listening to this." He cannot accept violence against the femininity he has come to accept. It is at this point, for the first time, that Jack begins to actively oppose Tyler's actions, first by seeking to expose Project Mayhem's plans to the police and then by risking his own safety to disarm the explosives. At long last, the final scene of the film depicts Jack's complete rejection of Tyler's hypermasculinity. He says, "my eyes are open" right before shooting himself in order to get rid of Tyler. With these words, he imbues his own kind of revelatory power on what he has undergone. His revelation destroys the hypermasculine ideal. In holding hands with Marla at the very end, Jack shows himself as having accepted his own feminine masculinity. He is no longer at war with himself and a part of him no longer discriminates against femininity. The false, performatively constructed gender which Jack struggles with throughout the film is no longer there and he is now free to represent "proliferating gender configurations outside the restricting frames of masculinist domination" (Butler 586). Intriguingly, the destruction of the buildings still takes place at the end of the film. Perhaps, the movie itself is declaring that Tyler's ideals were not so radical after all; the truly radical notion is an acceptance of all gender representations on an equal footing.

Any interpretation of *Fight Club* benefits from multiple viewings, critical opinions, and the depth of insight offered by literary theory. First, it helps to be able to define the form of masculinity which is celebrated on the surface of the film. In defining this hypermasculinity as a form of masculinity reduced to the anatomically male body, one can see that, in actuality, the film presents numerous ways in which hypermasculinity is destabilized. While Tyler tries to support the ideal by presenting it as a rigid, essential gender identity and by defining it apart from the feminine, he undercuts the ideal by imperfectly modeling it. Thus, since his body acts as the text upon which other men assimilate what is correct and incorrect hypermasculine behavior, the instability in his gender identity translates to instability in the gender identities of the other

men, including the Jack persona, who compose the system. The only way the hypermasculine ideal is maintained, then, is through the performative "public action" of the fight itself. When that performance fails to continue, Jack's gender identity diverges more and more from the ideal, until he finally rejects hypermasculinity altogether, and accepts the spectrum of gender variance. *Fight Club* can quite easily be viewed as celebration of misogynistic, masculine violence. Looked at in depth though, the film betrays itself, portraying the complexity of gender identity, the instability of the traditional male-female gender roles, and the somewhat radical notion of complete gender acceptance.

Works Cited

Brauer, Stephen. "'Men Is What We Are': *Fight Club,* the Authentic Masculine, and the Politics of Style." *Modern and Postmodern Cutting Edge Films.* Ed. Anthony D. Hughes and Miranda J. Hughes. Newcastle upon Tyne, England: Cambridge Scholars, 2008. 98-121. Print.

Burgess, Olivia. "Revolutionary Bodies in Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*." *Utopian Studies* 23.1 (2012): 263-280. Project Muse. Web. 6 Apr. 2014.

Butler, Judith. "From Interiority to Gender Performatives." *Global Literary Theory: An Anthology.* Ed. Richard J. Lane. New York: Routledge, 2013. 581-587. Print.

Edwards, Tim. *Cultures of Masculinity.* London: Routledge, 2006. eBook Collection (EBSCOhost). Web. 9 Apr. 2014.

Fincher, David, dir. *Fight Club.* Twentieth Century Fox, 1999. Film.

Giroux, Henry A. "Private Satisfactions and Public Disorders: *Fight Club,* Patriarchy, and the Politics of Masculine Violence." JAC 21.1 (Winter 2001): 1-31. Web. 6 Apr. 2014.

Reader, Keith. *The Abject Object: Avatars of the Phallus in Contemporary French Theory, Literature and Film.* Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2006. Print. 9 Apr. 2014.

Trotta, Jeannette. "Fighting Masculinity: Stereotyping as a Signifying Practice in *Fight Club.*" *Moderna Sprak* 98.2 (2004): 134-147. Print.

The Fordian Woman: Challenging Western Archetypes in *The Searchers*

Alyssa Faught

The western frontier is an archetypically masculine landscape. Having deliberately escaped the polite "graces of [eastern] civilization," the west is a place "'where men can be men'" (Warshow 37). Rugged and tough gunslingers, cattle ranchers and outlaws are welcome to the land of Monument Valley, the dusty desert, and the open blue sky. Yet, a man's not a man without a good woman by his side—so what then is the place of the *woman* in this profoundly male-dominated landscape? John Ford's *The Searchers* argues that not only is a woman the embodiment of domesticity within the western community, she is also a sign of hope, grace, and comfort in an otherwise bleak and barren world. Contrary to common depictions of passive femininity, Ford's western woman is a pioneer in her own right.

At her core, woman is the complete embodiment of the domestic sphere within the larger, opposing sphere of the desert. Traditionally, her duties are almost exclusively confined to the homestead. Women cook and clean and care for the children; they provide comfort for their husbands and a warm bed and meal for the road-weary traveler. This gender role is even at work among the strong, independent women of *The Searchers*. A prime example of this is when Laurie Jorgensen tells to Martin Pauley, her betrothed, about the responsibilities of a woman on the frontier. She passionately informs

him that a woman takes care of her man from the day she is born until the day she dies. Or perhaps, more accurately, until the day *he* dies.

Laurie continues to explain how women take care of all the men in the community; men come home from the desert, scarred both physically and emotionally, and the women must hold the family together. These words echo her actions, for while Laurie speaks, she busily attempts to bathe Marty, much to his chagrin. He is embarrassed and resists, but, as Laurie explains, he is *her* man. They have been promised to each other since childhood, and now that he has returned home (temporarily) from his mission to save Debbie, he is under her care and nothing will prevent her from performing her pre-ordained role. The bathing scene underscores how, in the West, home is an oasis in the desert and often the only comfort or community a pioneer will ever know. It also underscores the fact that women are the keepers of that community. By the same token, women who eschew their role as keeper of the home are looked down upon by the frontier community, as in the case of the "fallen woman" or prostitute (Warshow 37).

According to Durgnat and Simmon in their essay "Six Creeds That Won the West," a western woman can be divided into one of two categories: the schoolmarm, or the prostitute (70). In the literary genre, it is also known as the "virgin/whore" dichotomy. According to Western film scholar Robert Warshow, the "men [in the West] have *deeper* wisdom" that is evidenced by their sense of "organic loneliness," melancholic introspection, and battle (metaphoric and literal) with the land, while the women are fundamentally "children" (36-37), at least, the marriageable women are.

Often hailing from the East, the schoolmarm—the marriageable woman—"fail[s] to understand" her cowboy's ways. A civilized character, come to educate and "refine" the rugged people of the frontier, this woman is no stranger to the western genre (Warshow 37). Nevertheless, Warshow claims, she is childish, however well-intentioned she may be. The schoolmarm, for all her book-learning and ideals about morality and justice, cannot understand a western world. She is childish because she does not comprehend what a man must do to survive in the West, and so her beliefs are at constant odds with the choices he must make (to kill or not to kill—she would argue not; to skip town and continue with his loner ways or to stay—she would argue "stay," etc. etc.). As Durgnat and Simmon concur, "women who are hauled along are apt to find schoolmarmish excuses for the hero to shuck his manly, moral duties" (70). This kind of woman most certainly fulfills her role as a symbol of domesticity in the

bleak and barren terrain of the west, but she does not understand the very man—the cowboy—whose comfort she provides.

On the other hand, the woman who *does* understand the cowboy—the prostitute—is *unmarriageable* because of her checkered past and choice of profession (though all too often it is hardly a choice). She possesses cunning and tenacity equal to any man's. Like a cowboy, the prostitute has won her wisdom through experience; after all, one who must resort to prostitution to keep herself alive has probably seen and done a lot of things. And, like the lonesome cowboy Ethan Edwards, a Civil war deserter and ferocious Indian fighter, the prostitute is hardened by her lot in life. In return for her hardship, however, she has earned a "quasi-masculine independence" for herself, which is fundamental to her character: "nobody owns her, nothing has to be explained to her, and she is not, like a virtuous woman, a 'value' that demands to be protected" (Warshow 36-37).

Meanwhile, the self-righteous (married or unmarried, but still deemed 'virtuous') women around the prostitute are loved, but naïve. They rely on their husbands for protection. And the prostitute's "quasi-masculine" nature often gets her into trouble with them. In their eyes, the prostitute has no dignity, no respect, and no family of her own. She is very much a female cowboy, lonely and jaded. But there is still a key difference between them (besides the obvious issue of gender): a male cowboy can marry a virtuous woman and forsake his lonesome ways because "'when cowboys get married, they stop being cowboys'" (Durgnat and Simmon 70). But a prostitute is not afforded that same luxury because, in the western community at least, she can never wipe clean her tarnished past will forever be deemed unmarriageable.

A notable exception to this rule is a previous John Ford classic, *Stagecoach* (1939), in which the cowboy hero—played, of course, by John Wayne—falls in love and marries 'a woman with a past,' a prostitute named Dallas, who is actually much more respectable than all of her schoolmarm counterparts. As we see, Ford is no stranger to reworking western archetypes. Dallas is still treated poorly by most of her stagecoach companions, and her dramatic foil, the judgmental gentlewoman Mrs. Mallory, is treated like an innocent damsel in distress. Schoolmarms are patronized and the prostitutes are disdained, as is the custom in the western. Yet, John Ford's westerns seek to provide an alternative to the otherwise rigid virgin/whore dichotomy. As evidenced in *The Searchers*, Ford's version of a *true* woman of the west may have both the independence of a fallen woman, and the respectability of a virtuous one.

There is a surprising amount of strength in the women of *The Searchers*. They demonstrate their resilience throughout the film, perhaps most notably when Mrs. Jorgenson makes the 'Texicans' speech to Ethan and her husband, Mr. Jorgenson (He seems not to know the significance of his words when he recounts to Ethan: "she [Mrs. Jorgenson] was a schoolteacher, you know"). But long gone are the days of the self-righteous schoolmarm. This woman has lived as a pioneer's wife for years on the frontier; she has raised children on the land and watched one of them (Brad) die and another (Laurie) be left with no prospects. She has seen the massacre of the Edwards family, the threat of Indian attack looms constantly at her doorstep (literally), and she must helplessly stand by as one by one, the men in her life—the very ones to whom she has dedicated her life to taking care of—die. These toils, and the everyday toils of life on the frontier have hardened her, and her words resonate with the authority and wisdom which is usually reserved for the cowboys.

She commands respect, not only as a virtuous, hard-working woman, but also as an independent one. After all, so many good men are killed in their brutal environment that the pickings are slim for husbands; and the men that *do* stick around, Laurie's almost-husband Charlie McCorrie for example, are about as useful as a block of wood. Laurie must contend with this problem when Marty leaves for *five years* on his journey to rescue Debbie from the Comanches, and forsakes their engagement. Instead, he marries the Indian squaw, Look—a sticky situation which he did not even bother to explain to Laurie. All things considered, it would not be surprising if Mrs. Jorgenson had faced the very same situation, and was thus forced to marry Mr. Jorgenson, despite her own true desires. After all, Mr. Jorgenson is reminiscent of Charlie McCorrie, Laurie's second choice. Charlie is quite the simpleton; likewise, Mr. Jorgenson also appears dim-witted. His Dutch accent and light-hair and skin make him out to be a foreign man in foreign territory, almost a caricature, as opposed to the tanned, dark haired men Ethan and Marty, who fit in perfectly with their rough landscape. Their appearances denote capability, while Mr. Jorgenson's denotes comedy. What's more, he does not seem to recognize the gravity of the situation that his family faces, including Laurie's hopeless prospects. To the contrary, Mr. Jorgenson seems very light-hearted about the whole thing. And so it is largely up to Mrs. Jorgenson to take care of her family. She may be a virtuous woman, but her husband is *not* her protector. If anything, she seems to be his.

In the end, these woman represent hope. Their gentleness is both a retreat and a reprieve for the men of the frontier-lands; they

act as both pardoner and pardon, a mate with whom these men are allowed to show a softer, gentler side of themselves, a side which their harsh environment so often rejects. Jaded men are the burden of the western woman, but dead men are the only alternative.

A Ford western paints a much different portrait of the woman in the west. She is self-reliant, stubborn, competent, physically strong, and mentally tough. This Fordian woman is the definition of a pioneer wife, and she is not to be trifled with. In a Ford western, unlike those of his contemporaries, not *all* women are children. Childish women are foreign to the frontier just as schoolmarms are who have been sent from the East to bring "civilization" to the West. Although these women typical of the Western genre are idealized and often play the romantic leads, they are unlearned in the "practical" ways of living to survive (Warshow 37). In the eyes of the rough cowboy, this kind of woman is indeed a child—someone to be protected. But the Fordian western woman is a fighter, tough as nails, born on the land and raised in it (or otherwise immersed), strong as the men she raises, firm as the land she jointly cultivates.

Works Cited

Durgnat, Raymond and Scott Simmon. "Six Creeds That Won the Western." 1980. Rpt. in *The Western Reader*. Eds. Kitses and Rickman. New York: Limelight Editions, 1998. 69-84. Print.

The Searchers. Dir. John Ford. Perf. John Wayne. Warner Bros., 1956. DVD.

Warshow, Robert. "Movie Chronicle: The Westerner." 1954. Rpt. in *The Western Reader*. Eds. Jim Kitses and Gregg Rickman. New York: Limelight Editions, 1998. 35-48. Print.

Joyce vs. Rowling: Sexist or Feminist

Robert Durborow

James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series might seem an unlikely paring for literary comparison, particularly from a Feminist point of view. Such an undertaking might seem rather a daunting task; however a close study of these works reveals a few interesting similarities along with the more expected number of striking differences. Drawing from a variety of Feminist sources, including Cixous, Kristeva, and others, we may identify the stronger, more independent female characters in Rowling's, as well as Joyce's work, though eighty-one years separate the two stories. Joyce's text was first published in 1916, while the first installment of the *Harry Potter* series debuted in 1997 (Rowling). Both Joyce and Rowling created strong female characters who stand in stark contrast to their male counterparts, but there is a vast difference in male-female dynamics in these timeless works. An in-depth examination of both books reveals a significant amount of feminist literary progress in the treatment and status of female characters from Joyce to Rowling.

A proper examination of these two texts, from a feminist theory standpoint, requires a brief history of the Feminist movement. Contrary to popular belief, the women's movement of the sixties was by no means the inception of a quest for equality among men and women. As far back as 1701, sexually integrated jury cases were heard in Albany, New York, while the first state to pass women's suffrage

was Wyoming in 1869 (Legacy98.org). We may therefore assert that the Feminist movement, defined as "the doctrine advocating social, political, and all other rights of women equal to those of men" (Dictionary.com), was present in Joyce's day. The passage of time has seen significant gains for women toward greater respect, social and political standing, and many other areas, to include literature. The struggle, however, has been long.

To some it seems as if the conflict will go on forever. Hélène Cixous describes, "Such a display of forces on both sides that the struggle has for centuries been immobilized in the trembling equilibrium of deadlock" (1645). Herein, Cixous gives nod to the length of the "struggle" and the belief that the goals of Feminism have yet to be fully achieved. Joyce's writing supports both claims, if only by implication, but tends toward more restricting, sexist treatment of women as well as men prevalent in his day.

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man begins in an English "private school," which would be roughly equivalent to an American religious institution, such as a Catholic school. The school ranks the students, who appear to be all boys, in "lines" which are determined by age. The school staff hold religious titles or are supervised by those with such titles. In the first few pages of the work, a male dominated hierarchy is established in the use of such simple language as "prefects" and "captain of the third line" (Joyce 21). Further illustration of a masculine dominated society occurs on the following page when classmate Nasty Roche inquires of the main character, Stephen Dedalus, who his father is and what rank he possesses (22). Though Joyce's writing is at times difficult to follow, jumping from thought to thought, the trappings of a male dominated and fairly sexist environment are easily identified.

Another example of sexist behavior is manifest when another classmate, Wells, asks if Dedalus kisses his mother before bed at night. Stephen answers in the affirmative, and his fellow students laugh and ridicule him, perceiving this show of affection as a sign of weakness in Dedalus (26-27). Dedalus does not understand the reaction of his schoolmates.

Dedalus has a conversation in his mind, questioning why it should be wrong to act as he does, showing a more traditionally Feminist attitude toward his mother. Stephen considers his mother someone worthy of love and respect, and so is confused by the behavior of the other boys. The question the reader may derive from Joyce's writing is clarified by Dennis Sumara in *Of Seagulls and Glass Roses*:

> The way in which we come to know ourselves in the literary work is not embedded in the work, but rather emerges from our own interaction with the work. It is in this interactive process, manifested in the feeling of being lost, that the reader of the novel is sometimes able to find feelings, ideas, possible worlds that s/he did not have prior to the reading. (293)

Sumara clearly states that the reader brings his own baggage along for the literary ride. In the case of a current Feminist reading of the Joyce text, the reader arrives at her/his conclusions based on that particular reader's understanding of Feminism in its current state. A reader in Joyce's time might not find Dedalus' thoughts, or the actions of his schoolmates, sexist or unusual at all. The character Dante, however, presents a far more interesting discussion.

At Christmas dinner, Dante, a female, engages in a rather heated debate with the men in attendance. The men are speaking out against certain members of the clergy, whom Dante defends boisterously. While such a debate might be common and accepted as the norm in the twenty-first century, it was certainly less so eighty one years ago. Not only do the men in the conversation listen and respond to Dante's fiery speech, but Dedalus concludes Dante has made the better case (Joyce 38-44). Dedalus sees Dante as the victor of the argument, once again showing deference to the tutelage of a woman.

Cixous, in *The Laugh of the Medusa*, provides a vivid picture of what the Christmas scene in Joyce's story might have looked and felt like:

> Listen to a woman speak at a public gathering…She doesn't 'speak,' she throws her trembling body forward; she lets go of herself, she flies; all of her passes into her voice, and it's with her body that she vitally supports the 'logic of her speech. Her flesh speaks true. She lays herself bare. (1645)

We envision Dante speaking with the passion describe in these words. Perhaps that is why Dedalus mentally scores her cause the victor. Unfortunately, much of the remainder of Joyce's story is firmly fixed into the category of sexist.

All the respected leaders of the church in the story are male, as well as political leaders, and Irish patriots. From Parnell (Joyce 37), to Reverend William J. "Billy with the lip" Walsh (43), to Terrance Bellew MacManus (47), and more, all those in leadership positions of any kind are listed as men, with the notable exception of Queen Victoria. The majority of the women depicted it the Joyce text are presented in a firmly sexist light. The most notable of these is, perhaps, the

prostitute whom Dedalus encounters nearly halfway through the story.

Stephen is older at this point in the story and has begun to experience lust. In order to fulfill his physical greed, he "wanted to sin with another of his kind, to force another being to sin with him and to exult with her in sin" (98). As Dedalus locates a prostitute with which to fulfill his base desire, he passes fully into the realm of the sexist. His thoughts and actions turn from a semblance of respect for women to seeing them as objects. Fortunately, Stephen later repents until "He had no temptations to sin mortally" (139). The boy, now a young man, undergoes a change for the moral better and begins the search for something more.

Dedalus comes to terms with what he desires out of life as the story winds to a close. In the penultimate line of the work he states, "I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race" (224). Can this statement be interpreted as a desire toward a more Feminist outlook on life? Perhaps, perhaps not, but it is at the very least cause for hope.

Hope is the central message in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, written eighty one years after Joyce's text. It is a classic battle of good versus evil, with a significant number of strong female characters. Rowling's books are set in a magical version of an English "private school" much like Joyce's, but with some strikingly Feminist differences. Cixous admonishes women to:

> Write, let no one hold you back, let nothing stop you; not man; not the imbecilic capitalist machinery, in which publishing houses are the crafty, obsequious relayers of imperatives handed down by an economy that works against us and off our backs; and not *yourself*. Smug-faced readers, managing editors, and big bosses don't like the true tests of women—female sexed texts. That kind scares them. ("The Laugh of the Medusa" 1644)

Rowling embraces this advice with a mind that envisions strong, independent female characters and a pen that knows how to write them, though perhaps not as abruptly as Cixous suggests. Rowling submitted to several publishers before her books were picked up. One wonders how those who initially turned her down feel now.

In *Women's Time*, Julia Kristeva states and questions, "...women are writing, and the air is heavy with expectation: What will they write that is new?" (1576). Rowling's *Harry Potter* books provide one

answer. Rowling has penned one of the most widely read, bestselling series of all time, which appeals to young and old alike. Strong, authoritative, independent women characters abound in these works. Moreover, many of the male characters show women the respect and consideration they deserve. Hermione Granger, the main female character in the *Potter* books, is anything but a stereotypical (from a sexist point of view) female.

Far from shy, Hermione asserts her presence forcefully in the first book, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, quickly outstripping her fellow students (male and female) as the most intelligent student in the class. Harry describes her as, "the best in our year" to Horace Slughorn in Book 6 (70). Miss Granger solves the mystery of the beast that lurks in the Chamber Of Secrets, a basilisk, and how the creature travels about the school unseen in Book 2 (290-291), enabling Harry and Ron to locate the entrance to the Chamber and dispatch the beast.

Hermione becomes stronger and more independent as the series progresses. In the movie version of the seventh and final installment of the series, as Harry suggests Ron and he pursue the quest to destroy the evil Lord Voldemort alone, Ron states, "Are you mental? We wouldn't last two days without Hermione" (Grint). Hermione Granger is the only girl in the triad of heroes in the *Harry Potter* saga, but is by no means the only strong female character.

Professor Minerva McGonagall, Transfiguration teacher and Head of Gryffindor House, is written more as a force of nature than as a stereotypical schoolmarm. When he first meets this formidable woman "Harry's first thought was that this was not someone to cross" (Rowling 113). In Book 7, when the Battle of Hogwarts is imminent, it is McGonagall who takes charge and rallies the troops (595). In the battle itself, McGonagall does not cower or hide, but leads charge after charge, ultimately dueling with Voldemort (He Who Must Not Be Named) himself (735). The popular breast cancer awareness slogan, "Fight like a girl" springs to mind, and McGonagall does just that. McGonagall is also Deputy Head Mistress of the school and occupies the post of Headmistress for a time in Book 2, when the school governors remove Albus Dumbledore, and again in Book 6 after Dumbledore is killed (625). Clearly Harry's first impression of this woman is quite correct.

Rowling continues to write strong women into her books, including Nymphadora Tonks, a dark wizard catching Auror; Pomona Sprout, the Head of Hufflepuff House; Molly Weasley, mother of Ron and slayer of Bellatrix LeStrange (written as the most dangerous

Death Eater in Voldemort's dark wizard army). One of the School Champions in the race for the Triwizard Cup (Book 4) is Fleur Delacour of the Beauxbatons Academy (269). In creating these strong female characters, Rowling writes as Cixous admonishes, "Write! Writing is for you…" (1644). Judging from the overwhelming popularity of Rowling's books, writing is most definitely for her.

The *Harry Potter* books not only depict strong female characters, but respectful male characters. These male characters give up none of their masculinity, but treat their female counterparts as equals and partners. Albus Dumbledore, Headmaster of Hogwarts, chooses a strong woman to be his Deputy Headmistress, despite the availability of a number of qualified male candidates. It is clear Dumbledore considers McGonagall the best qualified individual for the job and McGonagall's performance of her required duties confirms Dumbledore's judgment. It is interesting to note that Rowling has stated she wrote Dumbledore, the most powerful and universally respected wizard of the age, as a gay man (Toppo). Albus Dumbledore acts as the hero's mentor throughout the series and guides Harry to accomplish his purpose.

Not all of Rowling's characters are strong women and respectful men. Some are written in what could be described as somewhat over-the-top stereotypical roles. Harry's Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon are overly obsessed with being "normal" and treat Harry like something smelly and sticky one might find affixed to the sole of a shoe. Harry's bedroom is described as "the cupboard under the stairs" (Rowling 19). Petunia and Vernon's treatment of Harry and his "abnormality" proclaim them as close-minded individuals, fearful of anything outside the stereotypical "normal" and more concerned with appearances than parenting.

Harry's Aunt Marge, whom Harry accidentally inflates in Book 3 (Rowling 29), is even worse than Harry's aunt and uncle, adhering to stereotypes (particularly the negative, sexist variety) like a drowning woman to a life preserver. Dolores Umbridge, who becomes a teacher and subsequently temporary Headmistress of Hogwarts in Book 5, rather make's Adolph Hitler look like a fluffy kitten. These characters appear written as contrasts or a sort of comic relief. All the characters in the *Potter* books combine to create an engaging story that has gained a great deal of attention worldwide, notwithstanding (or perhaps because of) its feminist leanings.

Julia Kristeva states that, "women's writing has lately attracted the maximum attention from both 'specialists' and the media" (1576). J. K. Rowling exemplifies this assertion. The fact that Rowling has

targeted a young audience adds to the subtle messages in these books. Instilling ideas of strong women and respectful men in the young will help create greater understanding and communication as these young people grow into adults. Kristeva talks of a third generation of women, a modern generation which are more enlightened than their predecessors:

> I am not speaking of a new group of young women (though its importance should not be underestimated) or another 'mass feminist movement' taking the torch passed on from the second generation. My usage of the word 'generation' implies less chronology than *signifying space*, a both corporeal and desiring space. So it can be that argued as of now a third attitude is possible, thus a third generation, which does not exclude—quite to the contrary—the *parallel* existence of all three in the same historical time, or even that they be interwoven one with the other. (1577)

This suggests a woman can be whomever and whatever she wishes, as it should be. Should she wish to be a mother and wife in the traditional sense, like Molly Weasley, she may do so. Perhaps she, like Hermione Granger, is, "…hoping to do some good in the world!' (Rowling 124). It may be that she aspires to become the next J. K. Rowling and write women and men as she sees them. This advice applies to men as well.

The main points Kristeva and Cixous make are not that far apart. Both advise women to discover who they are, whom they wish to be, and become those women. Cixous is fairly outspoken and abrupt with her advice, while Kristeva suggests repeatedly that the goals of women and the goals of men do not have to be as far apart as the two groups may have previously thought. The question that should be put to both women and men is: What will it take for both sides to be satisfied? Better still, as Kristeva implies, how do we do away with the idea that men and women are on opposite sides?

The *Harry Potter* books show men and women working together, sometimes well, sometimes not so well. In the end, however, evil is vanquished by a cooperative effort between men and women, as well as other creatures written to represent stereotypical racial and social prejudices of both men and women. Rowling's message is clear; understanding, respect, and cooperation between everyone involved will always win the day.

Though James Joyce's text makes some small effort toward

these same goals, the passage of time and changing of attitudes has accomplished considerably more. We must not consider the progress that has been achieved and will continue to be achieved as merely history or the passage of time. There is a good deal more to it than that.

Quoting *Finnegan's Wake*, Kristeva writes, "'Father's time, mother's species,' as Joyce put it; and, indeed, when evoking the name and destiny of women, one thinks more of *space* generating and forming the human species than of *time*, becoming, or history" (1565). Feminism is not a movement through time, but a generation of space for the continued social evolution of the human species. The achievements of the feminist movement are so far reaching and important to humankind that Kristeva further states:

> Here it is unnecessary to enumerate the benefits which this logic of identification and the ensuing struggle have achieved and continue to achieve for women (abortion, contraception, equal pay, professional recognition, etc.); these have already had or soon will have effects even more important than those of the Industrial Revolution. (1567)

Kristeva admonishes continued communication and understanding between men and women constitutes the most important advances we, as humans, can hope to achieve. In that light, the comparison of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* books provides hope for the future.

The obvious and vast differences in the literary depiction of both women and men in these two works show that the *space* of the human species has expanded significantly. The continued efforts of both sexes to increase this communal *space* can only increase understanding, respect, and acceptance among men and women.

Yes, progress has been made and space created, but there is more to be done. Until women and men share true acceptance, understanding, and respect of both differences and similarities, the journey is not complete. The comparison of Joyce and Rowling's texts illustrates what can be accomplished through literature in eighty one years. The next eighty one years can better the literary tradition and human condition even more. Let it be so.

Work Cited

Cixous, Helene. "The Laugh of the Medusa." Richter, David H. *The Critical Tradition.* Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007. 1627-1655. Print.

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1. Dir. David Yates. Perf. Rupert Grint. 2010. Film.

Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* Ed. R.B. Kershner. Second. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006. Print.

Kristeva, Julia. "Women's Time." Richter, David H. *The Critical Tradition.* Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007. 1563-1578. Print.

LLC, Dictionary.com. *Dictionary.com.* 2011. Web. 27 April 2011.

Project, Women's National History. *Legacy98.org.* 2002. Web. 28 April 2011.

Rowling, J. K. *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets.* New York: Scholastic, 1998. Print.

—. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows.* New York: Scholastic, 2007. Print.

—. *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire.* New York: Scholastic, 2000. Print.

—. *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince.* New York: Scholastic, 2005. Print.

—. *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban.* New York: Scholastic, 1999. Print.

—. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone.* New York: Scholastic, 1997. Print.

—. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone.* New York: Scholastic, 1997. Print.

Sumara, Dennis. "Of Seagulls and Glass Roses." Pinar, W. *Contemporary Curriculum Discourses: Twenty Years of JCT.* New York: Guildford, 1998. 289-311. Print.

Toppo, Greg. *USA Today.* 21 October 2007. 1 May 2011. Print.

Slipping the Noose: The Immortality of Human Experience in Philip Larkin's *The Less Deceived*

Zachary Nothstine

The Less Deceived is a distinctly modern book of poetry in which Philip Larkin presents the frustrations and disillusionments of modern man in beautiful imagery and stories. His narrators doubt and question the old structures in which humanity has traditionally found meaning, never fearing to voice their despair and worry over profoundly human concerns. Larkin's outlook is bleak, but often courageous because he refuses to equate the comfort value of an idea with its inherent truth value. If the evidence of God is lacking, he will not believe. If oblivion waits, crouched like a shadow to embrace him after death, he will face it, perhaps in despair, or perhaps in longing, but he will face it regardless.

Throughout this collection of poems, Larkin does face despair and disillusionment on many levels. He is disillusioned by human social values, such as love and family, and by religious institutions. The interesting points stem from what Larkin does with those feelings. Without denying his perception of bleak reality, in *The Less Deceived,* Larkin slips the constraining forces of social norms and biological death by creating a tapestry of human experiences through poetry. In doing so, he finds a way to leave something behind: an elevation of human experience as the most significant pursuit of humanity.

Larkin establishes his disillusionment with the world, and with the traditional structures in which people find comfort, numerous times in these works. He questions social values that are often taken for granted. In "Places, Loved Ones," the narrator rejects the normal sense of place and family. After stating he has never found a place to call home or a person who has any claim on him, he argues that, "To find such seems to prove / You want no choice in where / To build, or whom to love." Not only does the narrator reject these ideas about home and family, but in asserting that they take away choice, he imbues them with the power to imprison his will.

Examining other human interactions, the narrator in "Reasons for Attendance," reveals his disillusionment with romantic relationships, and even sex, when he says "but what / Is sex? Surely, to think the lion's share / Of happiness is found by couples - sheer / Inaccuracy, as far as I'm concerned." In both these instances, the narrator rejects social norms he observes as common in society and believes they can act as constraining forces.

Larkin then goes on to question religious systems and traditional concepts of an afterlife contained within those systems. In "Church Going," the narrator asserts the church "was not worth stopping for" and remarks "superstition, like belief, must die." He clearly places no stock in religion and he goes so far as to take for granted that eventually all churches will no longer be needed and "fall out of use."

In "Next, Please," the narrator describes the oblivion he perceives waits for humanity after death. He states that "Only one ship is seeking us, a black- / Sailed unfamiliar, towing at her back / A huge and birdless silence." For this narrator, there is only one universal—we will all die and face oblivion, with no afterlife and no "bird" to guide us. Furthermore, in going on to say "in her wake / No waters breed or break," the narrator emphasizes not only the oblivion awaiting us at death, but the impossibility of leaving anything of worth behind.

The careful reader will observe in these ideas two constraining forces which Larkin illustrates act upon man. First, the narrator believes normal human values, such as home, love, or God, limit him, which he seems determined not to allow. Second, man is constrained by the limits of reality; the certainty of his death, and the impossibility of any afterlife. The poem "Wires" strengthens and unites both of these constraining forces.

When they are young, steers "are always scenting purer water" outside their fence. However, when they "blunder up against the wires," "Young steers become old cattle," imprisoned by "Electric limits to their widest senses." The steers are imprisoned metaphorically

by both artificial norms and reality. The electric fence they run up against is artificial, thus their wariness of the fence is a learned behavior. The wires are conceptually linked to the first imprisoning force. At the same time, in associating biological age with the wires, the narrator implies mortal reality as a second constraint.

Clearly, in *The Less Deceived,* Larkin is dealing with some complex human issues–the bitterness of mortality, search for meaning, and disillusionment with human social and religious structures that attempt to create their own meaning. The question becomes; does the narrator simply surrender to this disillusionment and despair? The poem "Age" presents the answer to this question, when the narrator states he "needs must turn to know what prints [he] leave[s]." This image echoes the image in "Next, Please", in which the ship leaves no wake. Despite the earlier assertion, the narrator dares examine the possibility he can leave anything behind him. In looking, the narrator continues to question and demonstrates that he will not give in to despair at the thought of oblivion.

While his poetry is undeniably negative about life, Larkin does come to a sort of reconciliation with the human dilemma that pervades this book, a way to accomplish a semblance of longevity beyond one's own life. Again and again throughout the book, the narrator's attempt to portray experiences, whether their own or the people subject of the particular poem. Larkin presents a panorama of human experience through his poetry that has the power to outlive biological death.

The poem "Age" presents a helpful mechanism in a sort of inverse relationship. The narrator looks upon his age as "an inhabited cloud" and "a lighted tenement scuttling with voices." The image is that of the narrator inhabited by other people, other voices, other experiences. After looking at the prints he might leave behind, the narrator notes they might be "feet, / Or spoor of pads, or a bird's adept splay." The metaphor cuts in both directions: the experiences of others inhabit the narrator and the narrator inhabits the experiences of others. The overall effect is one of "slippage," in which detachment from normal associations allows one individual to figure for others, or one object to figure for a variety of emotions and anxieties.

We see Larkin slip into the experiences of others on multiple occasions throughout the book. In "Wedding-Wind," the narrator slips into the voice of a newly-married woman in order to examine the complexity of her emotions. The speaker notes the wind is "bodying-forth" her joy, referencing the "bodying-forth" Larkin does in this and all his poems. Another example occurs in the poem "Deceptions."

While the narrator does not assume the woman's voice in this piece, he starts the poem by identifying with her, saying that he can "taste the grief / Bitter and sharp with stalks." It is clear the woman Larkin speaks of was raped. In this instance he uses poetry in order to "body-forth" her pain. In both instances, the narrator inhabits the experience of another person while their experience inhabits the poem itself.

Larkin deepens this portrayal of human experience by slipping into a conceptual construct of the past as a story rather than memory. The detached nature of the past runs throughout the collection. The narrator demonstrates this in the poem "Whatever Happened?" The poem begins with "whatever happened" already "receding," giving the poem a universal applicability to virtually any event. The significance of this poem is the ever-widening gulf between person and event. A past event first becomes "kodak-distant" and later becomes simply "a latitude." The distance widens and by the end of the poem, the memory becomes merely a "yarn," whose origin cannot be properly traced and is thus detached from the individual who experienced it. It is interesting that this very distancing of the past allows it to figure or "body-forth" human experience in much the same way Larkin inhabits the experiences of others.

A strong example of this use of the past is found in "Lines on a Young Lady's Photo Album" in which the narrator explicitly separates past from present: "In every sense empirically true! / Or is it just *the past?*" The pictures in the photo album embody this detachment and allow for the narrator's grief at his inability to share that past.

The "slippage" mechanism is evident in Larkin's ideas about *names* in several poems in the collection, which also enriches the use of the past as figuring forth a variety of things. In "At Grass," the narrator describes two horses in a field simply grazing and resting. He notes they were race-horses "fifteen years ago" when "two dozen distances sufficed / To fable them." Connecting back to the idea of artificial norms, the horses' "names were artificed," a reference to the constructed nature of their "identities" from those racing days. Perhaps the most important point is that "Almanacked, their names live; they / Have slipped their names." Thus, while their names live as detached concepts, the horses are left in peace to live out their lives. Slipping one's name, then, is to detach the reality of oneself from the construct. One can observe that this is exactly what Larkin himself is doing in these collected works.

While he cannot literally "slip" his name, Larkin-as-narrator is a chameleon, identifying with and taking on the voices of numerous

narrators (who have also "slipped" their names) in order to "body-forth" the human experience. The names and stories within these poems outlive the biological death of Larkin and the subjects of the poems. A name itself is a separate construct, and is not subject to biological death. Thus, the subject of the photo in "Lines" becomes "clearer" as the years go by, the maiden name of the young woman in "Maiden Name" remains "vivid," and Larkin's poetry continues to be read long after he is gone.

In creating this panorama of human experience that outlasts him, Larkin has elevated the significance of human experience to an immortal, sacred, religious experience, the value of which he so obviously rejects. This goal is laid out in "Church Going" in which the narrator explains the one thing he appreciates about a church: that in its "blent air all our compulsions meet, / Are recognised, and robed as destinies. / And that much can never be obsolete." This is the answer to Larkin's disillusionment and feelings of imprisonment. In slipping into the experiences of others, Larkin frees himself. Concomitantly, human desire and human experience, as the narrator defines, are raised to the level of destiny and the value of those desires and experiences continue long after Larkin himself is gone.

In the end, Larkin not only faces the bleak nature of reality, but finds a way to create his own values, distinctly distanced from old systems like religion. Disappointed by the church, and home, and even familial and romantic love, Larkin finds solace in that "lifted, rough-tongued bell / (Art, if you like)." For Larkin, poetry is an active, freeing force, a way in which he can slip into and inhabit a wide variety of human experience. At the same time, he builds a foundation upon which his art may be observed, interpreted and enjoyed as an elevation of human emotion and experience and a celebration of our short lives as small pieces in the huge, varied, brilliant tapestry of life.

Works Cited

Larkin, Philip. *The Less Deceived.* 1955. London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 2011. Kindle file.

A Spiritual Journey: Faith and Puritanism in *Robinson Crusoe*

Melissa Van Treeck

In order to discover and define a personal sense of identity, one must undergo some representation of a spiritual journey. An important aspect of individual spirituality is religion and specifically the beliefs one chooses to follow. The natural progression in one's beliefs, which occurs as one grows closer to and learns more about God, life, and oneself, is depicted as a divine journey. Throughout the text of Daniel Defoe's, *Robinson Crusoe*, the religious representations that guide Crusoe along his holy journey serve to strengthen and test his faith in God and his religion. *Robinson Crusoe* illustrates the Christian belief system and ideology, particularly that of the Puritan religion.

In order to gain a good understanding of Robinson Crusoe's individual progression towards God, it is first necessary to understand the main beliefs of the Puritan religion. The focal point of this faith is in predestination, or the idea that everything is maintained and orchestrated by God, meaning that everything in this universe is His divine providence. The literal meaning of providence is foresight, and Puritans believed that God governed all living creatures as well as their actions in this universal government. The exact mode of this government is unexplained but it is certain that it is consistent and particular with God's own sense of glory and perfection. Some individuals were predestined to eternal life; others were destined

to eternal damnation with no exceptions. These views represented a people that were not equal or created on equal terms. God's maintenance and governance of all things was believed to extend to the natural world, the affairs of men, and individuals. Puritan belief was rooted in interpretations of the nature of man, free will, and predestination, which applies to all actions of man whether they are acts of sin or goodness. Sinful acts by individuals were believed to occur only by the permission of God, who has ultimate control over them. It was also believed that though these sinful acts could be overruled by good acts, they were also determined by God. It is important to understand that God was not seen as the cause or reason for sinful acts, nor did He approve of them. The only connection made with Sin was the limits, restraints, and overrule for good deeds that God controls.

Similarly, the Puritans were constantly active in learning about God's will and their relationship with Him. They believed that the most effective ways to learn about their Savior were through reading the Bible, listening to sermons, studying daily events, analyzing nature for signs, reviewing events in their lives for importance, and analyzing the state of their souls. These many different tactics helped followers to evaluate specific patterns of their lives as well as the spiritual meanings they encompassed. Another belief these followers emphasized was the mark of election or ability of being reborn. This marking was said to rehabilitate depraved human nature, but it was not a conversion that could stop individuals from relapsing into unregenerate behavior. Puritans believed that the perseverance and righteousness that can be attributed to individuals is only given and bestowed by God as He sees fit. They believed that the natural depravity that individuals undergo is the result of Adam and Eve's fall in the Garden of Eden and represents every person's corrupt and perverted ways. John Calvin, the interpreter of the Puritan belief system regarded this natural depravity as the reason individuals can be seen as "authors of their own destruction." Natural depravity was also seen as the cause of man's inability to exemplify acts of goodness; his mind only designs wicked and impure thoughts because of this original sin. The term 'regenerate' describes an individual who has undergone conversion, which is a gracious gift bestowed upon them by God. The belief that many people have is that they can convert at their own will and return to God, but Puritans believed that this notion was impossible, as it contradicts God's plan and glory. In order to receive God's grace, Puritans strove to lead a saintly life through sanctification. Lastly, the Puritan idea of vocation was understood as

God's call to social, economic, and religious roles or occupations. A believer's vocation was reached when he or she used specific talents given to him or her by God to wholeheartedly fulfill a calling.

Daniel Defoe beautifully represents all of these beliefs in the travel literature of *Robinson Crusoe*, in which he symbolically transforms an expeditious journey into a spiritual one. In relation to the Puritan belief of natural depravity, Robinson Crusoe is convinced that his rebellious behavior towards his father was his personal "original sin," for it leads to his exile on the island, mirroring Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden after their act of sin. In order for Crusoe to reach a state of repentance, he must acknowledge his own wickedness and dependence upon the Lord. The expression of gratitude and prayer is proven to be important when enduring God's challenges and experiencing His miracles, but it is not viewed as being sufficient in itself: individuals must experience repentance. Crusoe's mind is opened up to this idea when he is visited in a dream by a fiery and angelic figure. The figure comes to him during a feverish hallucination and asks him if he is ready to die for not having repented despite all that he had seen. This involvement allows Crusoe to admit his need for repentance and connects him with his spiritual consciousness in an experience of justification. Initially, the outlook that Crusoe had on the island was negative, as he played the role of a victim and blamed destiny for his bad situation. However, after experiencing repentance, he views the island more positively, complains less, and is more thankful of the miracles God shares with him, such as the sprouting of his grain. The exile provided by the shipwreck serves as a tool to deepen Crusoe's self-awareness and identity. The seclusion allows him to withdraw from the social world and turn inward, focusing on the spiritual. Thus, predestination is proven in this instance wherein sin is ironically justified: If Crusoe had never originally sinned when disobeying his father, he would never have learned about the necessity of repentance.

Also, the Puritan representation of sanctification is expressed through Crusoe's experience with repentance and his turning towards God. After the dream previously described, Crusoe decides to turn to prayer for the first time in his life and asks God to fulfill his promise, "that if I called upon Him in the day of trouble, He would deliver me" (Defoe 87). As Crusoe grows towards understanding God, he uses the Bible as structure, comfort, and guidance in God's word. This is the point wherein Robinson discovers that spiritual deliverance is much more important than the physical deliverance he had been craving on the island. He begins praying to God and simply asking for help,

not to be rescued from the island per se, saying, "Lord be my help, for I am in great distress" (Defoe 88). Puritans often practiced ways to make permanent records of events in their lives through writing in a journal or diary. It was important to keep track of every event that happened in an individual's life so that the happenings could be evaluated for spiritual meaning and patterns of significance. These practices stressed the key point in Puritan doctrines that every individual must keep careful watch of the state of their own soul. Crusoe exemplifies this belief by creating enthusiastic ways to keep track of his daily activities. Aside from keeping a journal to record the daily happenings, he constructs a makeshift calendar that does not mark the passing of days as normal but the days he has spent on the island. In this way Crusoe is able to make the calendar more personalized with his own being as the focal point. There is also a very specific Puritan belief that predestination can be proven through the duplication of significant events. In Crusoe's portrayal of this great providence, he notes that the date he ran away from his family is the same date he was captured and enslaved. Similarly, the day Crusoe survived the shipwreck and was cast ashore was also the day of his birth: "So that my wicked life and my solitary life begun both on a day" (Defoe 119). The Puritans believed in a correlation between these coincidences and justified them as the work of God's providence.

There are several other symbols of Christianity and the Puritan religion throughout the novel. The cross is a very religious symbol in many religions. Crusoe constructs a grand cross with his knife out of a wooden post and marks the passing of days on the island in capital letters, and chooses to place it where he first landed on the island. The cross can be viewed as not only a religious symbol but a connection with the social world which always needed to use dates and calendars. The large size and capital letters that Robinson makes on the cross serve as an illustration of the object's significance. According to Christianity, the cross represents new life along with the act of baptism. These representations can be seen through Crusoe's use of the cross to symbolize new existence, along with the shipwreck symbolizing the similarity to a baptism and submersion in water. Another spiritual symbol in this work is Crusoe's discovery of a footprint on the island. Here, it is evident that even though he has undergone conversion there will always be lapses back to the unregenerate state. The fear established after finding this footprint alludes to the idea that Crusoe's newly developed relationship with God may have been merely substitution of a human one. This event is very confusing, as Crusoe earlier expressed feelings of longing for

human companionship but is now shocked and interprets it very negatively like he did when first on the island. He initially believes the footprint to belong to the devil or an aggressor of some sort without even considering that it could be an angel or even a European commander who could help him. This almost shows that the real world may be the downfall of Crusoe's spiritual being, and that isolation might be his ideal and most beneficial state of mind.

Again, the Puritan illustration of providence is shown through events leading up to the shipwreck and even events on the island itself. While Crusoe experiences a realization of punishments and deliverances he has gone through, they guide him towards understanding to become aware of his sinfulness and move forward with conversion. In regards to the original sin that Crusoe acknowledged previously, he received warning from both his father and the captain of the first ship he went on against the rashness and danger of going out to sea. Ignoring the orders of these men is depicted as sinful because of the Puritan belief in authority. Both his father and the captain are figures of a providential social order implicated by God, and Crusoe's rebellion towards those individuals is seen as a denial of God. As a result, the shipwreck is believed to be one of the many punishments and deliverances bestowed upon Crusoe due to God's providence. When remembering his first voyage, Crusoe said, "… my conscience, which was not yet come to the pitch of hardness to which it has been since, reproached me with the contempt of advice and the breach of my duty to God and My Father" (Defoe 18). This quote alludes to the ideal of the father being regarded as God's deputy in the Puritan family structure, and disobeying his orders was almost equal to disobeying God. However, like the sin committed by Adam and Eve, disobedience followed restlessness and discontent with the station in which God assigned for Crusoe. One day, Crusoe felt the need to thank God for marooning him on the island because it saved his soul, but upon realizing the hypocrisy of the statement, he went on and "sincerely gave thanks to God for opening my eyes, by whatever afflicting providences, to see the former condition of my life, and to mourn for my wickedness and repent"(Defoe 142).

In addition to the shipwreck, Crusoe also believes to experience predestination often while on the island and in one particular event in regards to cannibalism. A repetitive theme in Crusoe's responses to events on the island indicates that whenever his physical survival is threatened, his religious practices tend to disappear. After Crusoe realizes that cannibals had visited the island, he becomes so enraged

with hate and fear that he spends years obsessing over ways to annihilate their people. Crusoe has a dream in which he rescues a cannibal and automatically assumes it's providential. This dream does become a reality, but when faced with the task, Crusoe does not respond in complete accordance with the dream. Initially, Crusoe does not take Friday into his home. In time Crusoe grows to treat Friday very fondly and shares with him the greatest expression of love as he converts Friday to his religion to save his soul, and he later even admits that Friday is the better Christian.

Likewise, there are many events in *Robinson Crusoe* that can be interpreted as Christian symbolism. In regards to the Puritan beliefs of recording all happenings to evaluate their spiritual and moral meanings, Crusoe's spiritual journey is represented by the symbolic nature of these experiences. Crusoe is thrown off course at sea, which is symbolic of a spiritual drift. Crusoe doesn't really have strong faith in God at this time, unlike he does after spending some time alone on the island. When Crusoe becomes enslaved, he also symbolically becomes enslaved by sin and the regret of disobedience towards his father and now of God. The next relative event Crusoe experiences is the shipwreck on the island he will inhabit. This can be a portrayal of a spiritual shipwreck in which Crusoe is torn about his decision, filled with regret, and hasn't furbished a relationship with God. Next, when he sets out to sea in a canoe, Robinson is almost swept out to sea. This alludes to the danger that lies in relying on oneself and the way in which he established his authority and became the master of himself, nature, and his fate without any help from God. Lastly, even though there can be several more symbols drawn from this work, the sprouting of the seeds of barley and rice can be seen as a reference to seeds of grace sprouting in Crusoe when he decides to admit his sinful ways and begin repentance.

Truly, Robinson Crusoe endures a very unique and challenging spiritual journey filled with both triumph and defeat. Even when Robinson was pouring his soul into performing proper repentance, he experiences lapses of judgment that are unrepentant. *Robinson Crusoe* can be categorized as a spiritual autobiography, meaning the work follows a specific pattern of events. These events are: the narrator sinning, ignoring God's warnings, hardening his heart to God, repenting as a result of God's grace and mercy, experiencing conversion, and achieving salvation. However, other events similar to all those included in a spiritual autobiography can be found in *Robinson Crusoe* as well. Moreover, religion is a general tool of literature not only because of its ideas, but because of the religious

works themselves. *Robinson Crusoe* was representative of the Christian religion of Puritanism and developed its action and characterization in coherence with their specific beliefs and values.

Ultimately, the journey that Crusoe chose out of disobedience to his father in favor of his own free will turned out to be the spiritual endeavor he needed to build a relationship with God. Through his accordance with God, he was able not only to use this to form his identity but also to bring him to ultimate salvation. Crusoe also represents an imperfect Christian who struggles with his faith and temptations through tests such as that of the cannibals' presence on the island in the novel. Throughout the text of Daniel Defoe's, *Robinson Crusoe*, the religious representations that guide Crusoe along his holy journey serve to strengthen and test his faith in God and his religion.

Works Cited

Defoe, Daniel. *Robinson Crusoe*. Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 1998. Print.

Smith, Christian. "Theorizing Religious Effects among American Adolescents." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42.1 (2003): 17-30. Web. 1 Dec. 2013.

Tao, the Environment, and Winnie the Pooh

Robert Durborow

Tao is. It's as simple as that. Tao, interpreted as "The Path", is a philosophy of the simplicity of being, acceptance of what is, and non-interference with the universe. Many environmental groups of today, such as Save Our Canyons in Salt Lake City, Utah (Dharmatech), agree with Taoist philosophy as it pertains to the preservation of wilderness areas and public lands. A. A. Milne's *Winnie the Pooh*, a popular children's character, enjoys a simple life of non-interference as well. With statements such as, "Always watch where you are going. Otherwise, you may step on a piece of the Forest that was left out by mistake" (Milne 1). Pooh himself might be classified an environmentalist of sorts, and certainly a Taoist. To compare Taoism and environmentalism with a famous children's book may seem odd, but there exists a definite connection. The simplistic Winnie the Pooh and his forest friends provide a basis for unhindered, honest comparison of these three very serious subjects. Allowing nature to simply be, without interference, is the essence of Taoist belief and an

enlightened approach to today's environmental concerns.

Lao Tzu, the founder of the Tao philosophy in the second decade of the fourth century and author of the *Tao Te Ching*, believed one should live in harmony with, and respect the sanctity of, nature. It is for man to exist within nature, in harmony with the universe around him, and to disrupt nothing. Another famous Taoist author and contemporary of Lao Tzu, Tao Chien, practiced what Lao Tzu preached by adopting the life of a rural farmer, though his family connections would have allowed him to serve as a government official. The simple life, or an existence in harmony with natural events, was preferable to a life of public service in Tao Chien's eyes (Owen 1358). Tao Chien wished to become one with Tao and felt that enlightenment could best be accomplished in a more rural setting. Many of today's environmentalists agree with the great Taoist teacher and poet, as does Winnie the Pooh.

Unfortunately, Tao Chien was forced to exist in the public world as well as his more idyllic private world. The poet recognized the realities and actualities of his world and strove to achieve balance between what he had to do to exist and the enlightened existence he so believed in and desired. Even the publication of his teachings to the world required a certain amount of compromise. In order for Tao Chien's poetry and prose to be disseminated to an audience, let alone the wide world, he had to send those writings to the larger world of which he disapproved (Owen 1359). Similar challenges face today's environmental community and the tranquil forest in which Winnie the Pooh resides.

Environmentalists must deal with more of the government bureaucracy and society than Tao Chien did. In order to effectively achieve the Taoist-like goals of non-interference, environmental organizations must deal with laws, courts, and the general citizenry, who often do not share their views or concerns (Dharmatech). The challenge posed to such groups seems somewhat more complex than it was to Tao Chien or Lao Tzu in their time. Non-interference with nature and the universe in today's society *requires* interference with just about everyone and everything else. The twenty-first century environmentalist often finds it necessary to "interfere" with land developers, engineers, the Bureau of Land Management, the National Forrest Service, and home owners. Where Taoism teaches non-action and non-contention, action and contention must be employed to preserve the natural order these environmentalists desire to protect. Herein lies a basic tenet of Taoism, as described in the second section of Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching*:

When the people of the Earth all know beauty as beauty,
There arises (recognition of) ugliness.
When the people of the Earth all know the good as good,
There arises (recognition of) evil.

Therefore:
Being and non-being interdepend in growth;
Difficult and easy interdepend in completion;
Long and short interdepend in contrast;
High and low interdepend in position;
Tones and voice interdepend in harmony;
Front and behind interdepend in company. (Tzu)

In light of this quote, the apparent conflict Tao Chien faced and with which today's environmental organizations contend proves no real conflict at all, but part of "The Path." Balance and enlightenment cannot be achieved unless imbalance and mental darkness exist first. The environment has no need for protection until someone or something threatens it. Winnie the Pooh understands this concept, and explains the complex philosophy of Tao in simpler language.

In *Pooh's Little Instruction Book*, Pooh says, "When looking at your two paws, as soon as you have decided which of them is the right one, then you can be sure the other one is the left" (Milne 4). This seems a very simple explanation in regard to the preceding quote from the second section of *Tao Te Ching*; it is, however, quite correct and beautiful in its simplicity. In essence, we must discover what is wrong to determine what is right. Therefore, when an environmental group identifies a threat to nature, intervention on *behalf* of Tao, of a balanced natural order, is clearly indicated. By the same token, Tao Chien saw the need to distribute his teachings to the world in order to spread the serenity of Tao. He used the only means available to do so, and thus did not disrupt Tao any more than required to achieve Tao's own worthy purpose. Tao is, and the true Taoist must deal with "The Path" as it is. Pooh, arguably the consummate Taoist, illustrates this concept on many occasions.

A. A. Milne's popular character uses plain language to simplify otherwise complex Taoist philosophical ideas. One of the more obvious of these is the belief of "do-nothing." Winnie the Pooh elucidates this approach in the statement, "Don't underestimate the value of Doing Nothing, of just going along, listening to all the things you can't hear, and not bothering" (Milne 1). Pooh effectively

instructs the reader to be aware of the natural world, to listen, see, and hear without disturbing. There is no attitude more appropriate to Taoism.

Lao Tzu describes the consideration of "do-nothing" in deeper detail than Pooh, but the meaning remains essentially the same. The following explanation is found in the sixty-third section of *Tao Te Ching*:

> Accomplish do-nothing.
> Attend to no-affairs.
> Taste the flavorless.
> Whether it is big or small, many or few,
> Requite hatred with virtue.
> Deal with the difficult while yet it is easy;
> Deal with the big while yet it is small.
> The difficult (problems) of the world
> Must be dealt with while they are yet easy;
> The great (problems) of the world
> Must be dealt with while they are yet small.
> Therefore the Sage by never dealing with great (problems)
> Accomplishes greatness. (Tzu)

In these few lines, Lao Tzu illuminates the simple words of A. A. Milne's loveable bear. The follower of Tao is admonished to be still and aware, to notice the flow of nature around him without interfering. By these actions, or lack thereof, the disciple may discern small problems and overcome them before they blossom into catastrophes. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. The difficult can be dealt with prior to becoming unmanageable. Lao Tzu instructs Taoists to become one with Tao, and Tao will instruct from there. This is the core and essence of Tao. The environmental group, Save our Canyons (SOC), seeks to educate and inform the general public of important environmental issues in much the same fashion (Dharmatech).

An excerpt taken from the SOC website describes the environment the organization desires to protect and reflects certain very Taoist principles, with which Pooh and Tao Chien might agree:

> One can hike into a beautiful cirque filled with snow, trees, and blue sky, in an hour and a half from the city's edge. It is the contrast between city and nature that Save Our Canyons strives to retain. The Wasatch Range is the inland equivalent

> of a seacoast which deserves protection for the wildlife habitat harbored within, as well as for the millions of people who will visit but do not remain. The idea of protecting our "mountain-coast" makes sense for the long-term good of Salt Lake City whose residents and visitors depend on these mountains as an escape from the hectic city life. (Dharmatech)

These statements contain an implied invitation to the reader to practice "do-nothing" by visiting and experiencing local nature firsthand. The need to protect these wild lands is succinctly outlined, ending with an actual invitation to a very Taoist escape from civilization. Lao Tzu, Tao Chien, and Pooh could not have phrased it better.

Lao Tzu, Tao Chien, today's environmentalist community, and Winnie the Pooh seem to agree that a simple life, striving for a balanced existence with nature and the universe, is a desirable circumstance and worthy purpose. It is difficult to disagree with such wise counsel. There is at least one Taoist belief that is universal in its truth. As penned by A. A. Milne in *Winnie the Pooh* and spoken through the furry lips of Pooh's wise companion, Eeyore, "A little Consideration, a little Thought for Others, makes all the difference" (Milne 1). May we all be as wise as that sage donkey in our treatment of others, their beliefs and concerns, our environment, and ourselves.

Works Cited

"Save our Canyons." *Dharmatec.* 1972. 15 October 2010. Web.

Milne, A. A. *All Great Quotes.* 2010. 15 October 2010. Web.

Owen, Stephen. "China's "Middle" Period." *Norton Anthology of World Literature, Volume B.* Ed. Lawall, Sarah. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2002. 1358-1359. Print.

Tzu, Lao. *Tao Te Ching.* (3rd or 4th century B. C.) trans. Lin Yutang (1948). Electronic Reserve (Southern Utah University). Print.

The Byronic Hero: Its Influences on 20th-Century Literature

Heather Owens

While the French Revolution and World War I are two very different events, they demonstrate a nearly identical effect on literature. Just as Lord Byron created a new hero archetype for his poetry in response to the French Revolution, so too did the "Lost Generation" of authors writing post World War I require a new kind of protagonist to confront a changing world. Lord Byron's invention of the "Byronic Hero" ushered in a new hero type who was different from the typical political or military heroes of Byron's non-Romantic contemporaries. Harold, from Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* Canto III, like the future literary protagonists he influences, represents an inability to connect with humanity and a subsequent isolation from them. What makes Byron's hero unique is the way in which he casts Harold's rejection from society not as a character flaw but, instead, an acceptable way of life for those who want to separate themselves from the calloused and weak, an attribute that would define future generations of this hero. Lord Byron's creation of this new character—the Byronic Hero—was born from a rejection of the typical Romantic heroes of the time and as a direct result of the political unrest in Europe, all of which serve as inspiration for the future "Lost Generation" of writers after World War I.

The "Byronic Hero" can be defined as someone who experiences frustration and defeat in both their public and private lives. He has

an inadequate fulfillment of heroic character in his public persona and in love, and an intellectual and spiritual culmination of heroic character through a sublime experience (Bruffee 671). In other words, while the Byronic Hero is a "hero" who has an unlikeable personality, he is nonetheless redeemed in the end and subsequently gains the audience's approval because of his abounding defeats. Consequently, the Byronic Hero is more relatable to audiences because he experiences a fall and redemption; the audience is able to relate to this fall and it gives them hope for their own redemption as well.

Lord Byron's *The Pilgrimage of Childe Harold* Canto III introduces Harold as a new type of Romantic hero. As Bruffee explains, "As the first step in this process, *Childe Harold* III may be seen to be Byron's preliminary attempt to create and delineate, as a truly meaningful character, the alienated hero" (670). Lord Byron gives an extensive overview of the Byronic Hero through the descriptions and actions of his character, Childe Harold, specifically within Canto III where, in its beginning, it is clearly announced that significant time has passed and that Harold has grown up: "Yet Time, who changes all, had altered him/In soul, and aspect as in age: years steal/Fire from the mind as vigour from the limb" (69-71). With this announcement, the reader is immediately informed that not only has time passed but Harold has changed as he has grown older. With these new changes, Harold reflects on his life and new role within society as a growing adult. After contemplating the idea of aging and his new responsibilities dictated to him by society, he quickly realizes himself to be, "the most unfit/Of men to be herd with man, with whom he held/Little in common" (100-103). Theses stanzas provide the first glimpses into Harold's internal isolation from his community. Byron uses the word "herd" to imply that humanity is like a group of sheep that have no minds of their own but simply follow a master around unquestionably. In addition to the sheep herding connotation, there is also the connection to the word "heard" to imply that Harold is silenced within his society. If he cannot be "heard with man," then he must live a silent life without opinion or thoughts. The pun pits society against the individual and invites the reader to support Harold's attempts to gain relevancy and independence.

It becomes immediately apparent that Harold is not the typical hero; instead of being praised for his wonderful qualities, he is alienated. While this is unusual for current-day heroes, it was even more unusual for the romantic heroes who praised intellect in conjunction with, not despite of, personal defects. Harold ponders

his isolating independence and finds that, although his mind sets himself apart from others, he enjoys his views and opinions: "Proud though in desolation—which could find/A life within itself, to breathe without mankind" (107-108). In other words, Harold chooses his own independence over fitting in with his contemporaries; he realizes that he cannot keep his individuality while also participating within his world of humanity. His alienation is so acute that Harold actually runs away: "Self-exiled Harold wanders forth again,/With nought of hope left" (136-137). Harold's sense of inadequacy compels him to go out and seek meaning for his life; if he cannot find meaning within humanity then he believes he can find it elsewhere.

Harold sets out to find a place of acceptance and has many experiences that force him to understand himself better as well as the world he is approaching. Throughout these experiences, though, he becomes only more alienated. Harold must therefore come to terms with the fact that he could be isolated from humanity permanently. This struggle between acceptance and alienation comes to a climax when he is looking at himself in the reflection of a lake and must justify his actions within himself:

> To fly from, need not be to hate, mankind;
> All are not fit with them to stir and toil,
> Nor is it discontent to keep the mind
> Deep in its fountain, lest it overboil
> In the hot throng, where we become the spoil
> Of our infection, till too late and long
> We may deplore and struggle with the coil
> In wretched interchange of wrong for wrong
> Midst a contentious world, striving where none are strong.
> (653-661)

Harold realizes here that he is separate from everyone and that he cannot change this fact. In his opinion, he separates himself from society not out of hatred for it but simply because he does not and will not fit in. While his separation has become a self-exile from the world, Harold does not find this self-exile to be wholly negative. According to Harold, because "all are not fit" to mingle perfectly within humanity it seems natural that he would be an outcast (654), and, consequently, he has no reason to work to fit in. Harold chooses to stay true to his own beliefs and morals rather than work to fit into a world where there is only "interchange of wrong for wrong" in the world were "none are strong" (660-661). Harold elevates his hero status with

this realization and exemplifies strength in leaving a weak society of wrongdoers in search for a society of strong people who live by their own beliefs. Harold's ultimate "redemption" allows the audience to praise him for his martyr-like rejection of the easy and immoral way of life for a more honest existence.

One possible historical figure who served as Byron's inspiration for the Byronic Hero is Napoleon Bonaparte. Like Napoleon, Harold is able to govern anything "but govern not thy pettiest passion" (339). While Harold is able to free himself from the world around him he is not able to change himself to fit within it. Then, once he achieves his freedom, he is still unable to be truly happy even though he is at peace with his decision. These Byronic heroes "aspire/Beyond the fitting medium of desire" but once that aspiration is kindled it becomes "quenchless evermore" (372-375). While both Napoleon and Harold reach their end goals—for Napoleon it is conquest, for Harold it is self-actualization—neither of them feel accomplished. This connection is made even more strongly because this Byronic Hero is a direct reaction to the failure of the French Revolution. Previously, military efforts were romanticized and held to a high honor. After the gore and horror of the French Revolution, many were disenchanted by the entire war process (Cantor 376). As a result, the idea of the "hero" changed from the military figure to the individual. Instead of praising those in charge of useless death and slaughtering, poets began praising the everyday man. As a result of this movement, it has become "quite natural that a poet should write, not about the heroic world of war and politics, but about his own feelings as a private individual" (Cantor 376). Byron's hero focuses not only on the private individual's feelings but also on his isolation and ability to live within a world created solely for himself.

With *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Lord Byron creates an alter ego of himself in order to live vicariously through another, and, in so doing, influences many future writers to do the same. As he explains in the opening of Canto III, he writes in order to "…create, and in creating live/A being more intense, that we endow/With form our fancy, gaining as we give/The life we image—even as I do now" (46-49). Ironically, Byron uses Childe Harold, an invented literary figure, to feel himself more alive. By creating this new hero, Byron succeeds in doing more than creating a figure for him to live through; he creates a new genre and world for other authors to explore. This idea of the "isolated hero" has inspired future writers and has given these individuals a home in 20th-century literature. Harold is unable to find acceptance within his own world, much like characters of the novels

from the "Lost Generation" did within their literary worlds. Harold, therefore, paves the way for acceptance of the "misfits" of society who do not fit in. Through the creation of Harold, Byron inspired others to reject a society in which they do not belong in favor of seeking their own personal solace.

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage was written in 1816, but the theme of isolation is one that has carried over to modern literature, such as those novels emerging from the "Lost Generation" over a hundred years later. The "Lost Generation" refers to a generation of writers who were so disenchanted from World War I that they moved to Europe to write and start their lives anew. While other writers were bringing focus back to the military hero, the Lost Generation writers wrote of the true horrors and evils of being a soldier in war. While the French Revolution and World War I are both very different events, both the Lost Generation and Byron had similar reactions to the "failed" uprisings and Byron's effect on the later writings of this generation is clear in both theme and use of the Byronic Hero.

The most notorious author of this "Lost Generation" is Ernest Hemingway. As a result of fighting in World War I, many of Hemingway's novels and short stories detail the daily lives of those affected by the War. Hemingway responded to the war much in the same way Byron responded to the French Revolution; both found the war to be a great failure and used writing to speak against it. The best example of Hemingway's protest is his semi-autobiographical novel *A Farewell to Arms*. During World War I it was very common for soldiers to be romanticized for their service and propaganda played heavily into this idea. Yet, the main character of *A Farewell to Arms*, Lieutenant Henry, runs away from the army. Not only does he abandon his post but he suffers no negative consequences as a result of his action. In a world where military service was considered the highest honor and duty, it is revolutionary that this character would abandon it. Much like Byron's hero, Hemingway's Henry is an ordinary person who, while he starts out as military personnel, does not display any military heroics.

Ernest Hemingway's contemporary, F. Scott Fitzgerald, was another prominent figure in the "Lost Generation." While Fitzgerald's most recognized work, *The Great Gatsby*, does not directly deal with the war, it still paints a prime example of a Byronic Hero. Nick Carraway moves to New York City and inadvertently rents a house next door to the infamous Jay Gatsby. While Jay Gatsby did fight in the war, that is barely a large point in his character. Jay Gatsby is romantic, narcissistic, persistent, and mysterious—all of which are both faults

as well as strengths. Nick is forced to play a supporting role in his own story of the horrible characters surrounding him, including his neighbor, cousin, girlfriend, and various other people. Jay Gatsby is a personification of the Jazz Age in the sense that he is very flashy and very rich, but the more the reader sees into his motivations and personalities the less appealing he becomes. At first, Nick and Daisy are charmed by Gatsby's freedom and richness, but then his desperate and self-centered personality breaks through and the characters are able to see his negative influences. While untraditional in the scheme of the Byronic Hero stereotype, Nick Carraway is born out of a direct influence of Lord Byron. When Daisy and her husband move away, completely ignorant of the deaths they have caused, Nick reflects on their way of life:

> "They were careless people, Tom and Daisy—they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made" (Fitzgerald 179).

This is Fitzgerald's way of rebelling against the Jazz Age. Much like Byron and Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald uses his narrative to create a relatable hero in order to underscore the harms of humanity and to justify man's desire to escape from it. Nick is much like Harold in this way; he is in the best part of society possible but does not have a voice to be "herd" within his society. Rather than continue playing into their game and trying to fit in—which would cause him to give up his entire worldview, especially on the importance of human life and relationships—he realizes that he cannot be a part of their community and instead chooses to isolate himself and leave his new home. Nick's "sublime experience" that causes his redemption is the death of Gatsby and the realization that he is the only one who truly cared for his friend. In this realization, he is able to define his own character and gain the strength to leave and find his own area of acceptance just as Harold in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.

While a few decades beyond the "Lost Generation" of World War I, the most recognized Byronic Hero of the second half of the twentieth century is J.D. Salinger's Holden Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye*. Holden begins his story at the point where he is kicked out of his expensive boarding school, Pencey Prep. It is at this point that Holden begins his own pilgrimage. Much like Harold, Holden struggles with both wanting to help mankind while simultaneously not fitting in.

Holden is growing up and must face the responsibilities of being an adult soon, and does not know how to make his morals fit into the world. As he says, "You can't find a place that's nice and peaceful, because there isn't any. You may *think* there is, but once you get there, when you're not looking, somebody'll sneak up and write 'Fuck you' right under your nose" (Salinger 264). While not as explicitly stated, Harold is facing the same struggles and has the same perceptions of his own world. Harold asks, "Is it not better, then, to be alone,/ And love earth only for its earthly sake?" (671-672). Similarly, Holden expresses to his little sister, Phoebe, that he is going to run away to live in the woods forever with only himself and nature. While Holden does not capitalize on this desire as Harold does, Holden still embodies all the other characteristics of a true Byronic Hero. Holden's "sublime moment" comes when he takes Phoebe to the carousel in Central Park. While he is standing there and watching her, he becomes overwhelmed with happiness that he could witness such happiness in another person. The reader is instantly drawn to his support because it is clear that, despite his inability to fit in, he is ultimately a good person and finds happiness in making others happy.

Holden Caulfield served as inspiration for other writers such as Kurt Vonnegut, Philip Roth, and Sylvia Plath—all of whom inadvertently have perpetuated the idea that Byron presented in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (Slawenski 179). Even though Byron is writing his poem two hundred years earlier, his themes have resonated with authors of the modern era and still influence writers today.

Works Cited

Bruffee, Kenneth A. "The Synthetic Hero and the Narrative Structure of Childe Harold III." *Studies in English Literature* 6.4 (1966): 668-78. *JSTOR*. Web. 31 Mar. 2014. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/449361>.

Cantor, Paul A. "The Politics of the Epic: Wordsworth, Byron, and the Romantic Redefinition of Heroism." *The Review of Politics* 69.3 (2007): 375-401. *JSTOR*. Web. 31 Mar. 2014.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. New York: Scribner, 2004. Print.

Salinger, J. D. *The Catcher in the Rye*. Boston: Little, Brown, 2001. Print.

Slawenski, Kenneth. *J. D. Salinger: A Life*. New York: Random House, 2010. Print.

Wilson, James D. "The Romantic Heroic Ideal." *Studies in Romanticism* 24.3 (1985): 430-33. *JSTOR*. Web. 13 Apr. 2014. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25600553>.

Wu, Duncan. *Romanticism: An Anthology*. Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2012. Print.

This publication was prepared by Northern Kentucky University. Northern Kentucky University is committed to building a diverse faculty and staff for employment and promotion to ensure the highest quality of workforce and to foster an environment that embraces the broad range of human diversity.

The university is committed to equal employment opportunity, affirmative action, and eliminating discrimination. This commitment is consistent with an intellectual community that celebrates individual differences and diversity as well as being a matter of law.

Discrimination against any individual based upon protected status, which is defined as age, color, disability, gender, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status, is prohibited. The university will provide equal opportunity to all employees in regard to salaries, promotions, benefits, and working conditions and will monitor these areas to ensure that any differences that may exist are the result of bona fide policies and procedures and are not the result of illegal discrimination. 47756