SYMPOSIUM

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A JOURNAL OF RESEARCH AND INQUIRY

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Symposium

Great Books Curriculum of Wright College
A Journal of Research and Inquiry
Dedicated to the Best That Has Been Thought and Said

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Wright College Community,

The Great Books Program is thrilled to introduce the sixth edition of the *Symposium Journal*. This journal serves as a platform for community college students to share their analyses of great works of literature. Community colleges offer an educational experience often associated with practicality and affordability. Although many recognize the pragmatism of a community college education, we also recognize its potential as a catalyst for intellectual growth and personal transformation. As Bruce Gans, founder of the Wright College Great Books Program, rightly concluded in the *GBSJ*'s first edition, "this magazine lays forever to rest all the objections raised by faculty and students themselves that real enduring works of the mind are… beyond the abilities of community college students."

Thus, the *Symposium Journal* is of particular importance to Wright College, as it uncovers the hidden talent within its community. The *GBSJ* provides a platform for students to showcase their command of literature. Each author demonstrates not only the capacity to analyze complex texts but also a willingness to expand into other intellectual domains. Consequently, each essay reflects the plurality of interests and perspectives at City Colleges. This edition of the *Symposium Journal* encompasses readings of Medieval, Early Modern, Romantic, Russian, and Modern literature, while offering critical insight into the intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of human behavior. When you read these manuscripts, consider the immeasurable effort of the diligent students who wrote them and their will to share their talents with the world.

This year, we were very fortunate to have a talented editorial board consisting of thirteen students. They worked tirelessly to read essays and provide insightful commentary—bolstering the *Symposium Journal*'s quality of scholarship. I share a deep admiration for our contributors' dedication and spirit of intellectualism, which I personally encountered during honors literature courses at Wright College. Each of them contributed significantly to my growth as a learner and as a person, and I dedicate this journal to them.

Furthermore, I would like to extend my appreciation to the faculty members who made this journal possible. First and foremost, I am sincerely grateful for the efforts of Dr. Michael Petersen, who is undoubtedly the glue of this operation. Thank you also to the professors at Wright College, Oakton Community College, the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Austin (TX) Community College, and the University of California San Diego: you are all essential to the journal's success. To the Wright College administration-- President David Potash, Vice President Alanka Brown, and Dean of Instruction Pamela Monaco—thank you for your continued support.

I want to conclude with some thoughts on the utility of literature itself. Literature, according to Mario Vargas Llosa, is not merely a "luxury," but "one of the most primary and necessary undertakings of the mind, an irreplaceable activity for the formation of citizens in a modern and democratic society, a society of free individuals." To engage with literature is to grapple with the most fundamental questions of being. Literature allows us to confront our existential concerns, explore applications of political thought, and challenge the world around us. For, according to Llosa, "all good literature is radical, and poses radical questions about the world in which we live." Compelling literature does not simply reaffirm our reality; it distorts, compromises, and challenges what we consider to be fixed or stable. Accordingly, I urge the readers and contributors of the *Symposium Journal* to be bold. Challenge the norm, and don't shy away from eccentricity. The world will benefit from your voice.

All the best,

Izaki Metropoulos

Iago’s Double Identity: How Self-Deception Results in Chaos and Destruction in William Shakespeare’s *Othello*

JULIA BORRELL POZO

In William Shakespeare's *Othello*, Iago is one of Othello’s most trusted officers and, simultaneously, a destabilizing, untrustworthy force. Scholars have disagreed as to whether intentional malevolence or irrational hatred drives Iago’s actions. Iago’s ambiguity is manifested by his constant deception, misrepresentation and double-dealing. Iago, pretending to pursue one set of intentions while acting affected by another, attempts to become something greater. Although Iago’s double-dealing instigates chaos and drives other characters’ destruction, Iago, himself also trapped by the consequences of his actions, is incapable of recognizing who he really is. In fact, neither the reader nor Iago is capable of constructing his identity. Shakespeare portrays Iago’s self-deception by depicting him with a double identity; his emotional instability and facade of outer confidence masks his inner vulnerabilities, and his words and actions result in chaos and destruction.

Iago has the striking ability to be perceived as an honest and trustworthy man, while also sharing with the audience his malevolent intentions. Iago has a blurry personal identity. The *Oxford English Dictionary* describes *personal identity* as “the condition or fact of being one person, or remaining the same person throughout the various phases of existence; continuity of the personality.” According to this definition, Iago is not a single individual. His public identity differs significantly from his inner feelings. As a way of illustration, in the second-act soliloquy, Iago confesses to the audience his intention to manipulate Othello in order to convince him that Desdemona is cheating on him: “I’ll pour this pestilence into his ear: / That she repeals him for her body’s lust” (2.3.351-52). Even as Iago’s malicious intentions are explained to the audience, other characters, such as Cassio and Othello, refer to him as “honest Iago” (1.3.295ff.). The audience has two different impressions of Iago, his inner version, when he speaks to the audience in his soliloquies, and the outer version when he interacts with other characters. These two perspectives contribute to his double identity.

Iago is, metaphorically, a double-faced character, just like Janus, the two-faced Roman god who can look in different directions at the same time. At the beginning of the play, Othello asks Iago if the officers are entering, and Iago responds: “By Janus, I think no” (1.2.33). The mythological interpretation is subject

[1] *Oxford English Dictionary*, “personal identity” a.

to the play's context; Othello and Iago are in the dark, lighted by the officer's torches. Since Othello is being followed because he married Desdemona secretly, Iago may suggest that Brabantio and the Duke do not know the reason behind Othello's marrying Desdemona. Ayanna Thompson interprets Iago's response to Othello as, "the god who sees what others cannot see because it is dark" (134). Iago's response is analogous to his character: Iago is similar to Janus because Iago's double identity enables him to see a situation from a different pair of eyes, which enables him to manipulate others. In effect, Iago is two-faced in his motives and behavior, just like Janus.

The audience also sees the "two-faced" persona of Iago as a double identity because we are not capable of deciphering where his actions lead. Scholars have struggled to analyze Iago's actions because his double identity confuses our interpretation of his actions. Some scholars, like Samuel Coleridge, argue that Iago does not have a clear reason behind his actions, that he is a singular character capable of spontaneous improvisation (Thompson 53). On the other hand, A. C. Bradley disagrees with this interpretation, arguing that Iago has a clear motive for his actions: destroying Othello's life (61). Bradley argues against Coleridge because Iago's actions are guided by his desire to get revenge on Othello. Alexander Leggatt brings together the opposing arguments by offering that Iago is "clear about his tactics but he is vague about what he actually hopes to accomplish" (112). Leggatt's statement matches with Iago's double identity. Iago's two different faces looking in different directions means that it is not always clear that what he says matches what he means. Iago is not a god but a human. Therefore, he is not able to look in two directions at once, like Janus, without being hypocritical and having hidden motives.

The function of Iago's mask is to project confidence, but it only exists in the external, in his alternate identity. Benjamin Beier argues that Iago is self-aware, and he clearly uses the art of persuasion to shape his goals (39-40). However, Beier fails to consider how Iago's self-awareness is challenged by his torn and divided identity. Beier's description of Iago as a secure character with clear motives is not persuasive because Iago's external security is foreshadowed by his internal conflicts. Paul Cefalu challenges Beier's point of view, arguing that Iago is an insecure character who creates an external identity as a "way of organizing his perceptions that offers him the stable self and peace of mind that he envies in others" (273). Cefalu questions Iago's self-awareness and suggests that Iago creates an external identity in order to satisfy his inner insecurities. Iago's interior vulnerability plays a key role in understanding his impulsive actions; he hides his own anxiety behind a mask of a stable, secure, confident, and honest person.

Iago's inner vulnerability ignites suspicion and spreads chaos. There is a parallelism between Iago's own failures and how he manipulates Othello and Cassio to take certain actions. Since Iago presumes that Othello slept with his wife, Emilia, he instigates Othello to suspect his own wife, Desdemona, of sleeping with Cassio. In this way, Iago projects his insecurity regarding his own relationship onto Othello. Likewise, Iago plans to remove Cassio from his position of lieutenant because Iago suffered humiliation after being passed over for the position. These correlations emphasize the play's main theme, the effect of jealousy and humiliation. As Cefalu points out, "Nothing of what he predicts of others is based on extrapolations from his own mind, that is, of mental simulations that typically follow empathy or simply putting oneself in another's place" (274). Cefalu underlines that Iago's ability to manipulate others is drawn from his own experience. Therefore, Iago's inner suffering and vulnerability are the vehicles for action, and throughout the play, disgrace and shame take control of the narrative.

One function of Iago's double identity is to demonstrate the weaknesses of self-deception. Iago's ambition to destroy Othello is subjected to a more profound and fundamental truth, his ego defense. If one has a purpose in life, it is assumed that one has established goals and a clear vision of oneself, yet Iago, after planning his malicious acts and reaching his objective, reveals his internal insecurity. Scholars have analyzed Iago's statement "I am not what I am" (1.1.65) from multiple perspectives. For example, Cefalu states that for Iago this statement is an alternative to "a much more corrosive, if unspoken and disturbing, belief—that all people are not what they seem to be" (273). Cefalu analyzes how Iago's statement is strictly connected to his judgment of other characters. Cefalu maintains a well-founded argument: Iago extrapolates from his own susceptibility in order to manipulate others; hence, since he is not what he seems to be, he also distrusts others' identities.

However, other scholars, such as Stephen Greenblatt, focus on Iago's dilemma as a declaration of self-division that reveals the character's mask: "I am not what I am" suggests that this elusiveness is permanent, that even self-interest, whose transcendental guarantee is the divine 'I am what I am' is a mask" (41). God does not have to wear a mask because a mask is used to hide oneself and, by definition, God is truth. For example, at the end of the play, Iago does not disclose any particular reason for his actions. He states, "Demand me nothing. What you know, you know" (5.2.300). His futile revelation at the end of the play emphasizes the deep sense of powerlessness he feels when trying to accept the consequences of his actions: "the only possibility in his case is not revelation but silence" (Greenblatt 41). Iago is trapped between believing his own lies and accepting who he really is. In her introduction to *Othello*, Thompson quotes T. S. Eliot: "Nothing dies harder than the desire to think well of oneself," which he calls "bovarysme, the human will to see things as they are not" (62). Even though Eliot here is analyzing Othello's behavior, the same point applies to Iago. Iago has the ultimate desire to consider things to be as they are not. As Robert Watson notes, the ambition of becoming a memorable individual and excelling oneself beyond a given destiny is a natural human inclination. However, this ambition can turn into a tool of self-destruction, leading to a "betrayal of nature and origins that invites primal punishment" (162). Iago's human desire to be converted into something greater than he is turns into a nightmare where self-deception leads to a deconstruction of his identity.

By the end of the play, Iago's personal identity is unclear, and this lack of clarity ultimately leads to his destruction and everyone else's. Iago, through his persuasive manipulation, changes the personality of other characters. For example, Othello at the beginning of the play is a loyal, faithful and virtuous individual, whereas at the end, he is depicted as an evil person capable of killing his innocent wife. Iago challenges the status of Cassio and Othello in Venetian society and progressively transforms them, driven by the power of ambition and jealousy. Iago is a genius of destruction. He is capable of influencing other characters' identities, from meaningful to meaningless, and Iago, too, is associated with a meaningless identity because of his own double identity. Therefore, many academics have argued that Iago diverges from the nature of God, which is pure meaning and creation. For example, Leggatt argues, "this is as close as we get to the heart of Iago, pure destruction as God is pure creation, issuing from non-identity, as God is pure identity" (124). At the end of the play, Iago's fate is torture and execution by Montano. When Othello commits suicide and falls on his bed next to his wife, Desdemona, Ludovico demands Iago look at the consequences of his evil acts. Iago loses everything he had: his life, personal identity, social prestige, and the trust of others. Iago's double identity, self-deception, and ambition to become something greater are the causes of his evilness.

Shakespeare exposes the weaknesses of human self-deception through Iago's double identity. Even if Iago tries to mask his inner instability, by hiding his motives he ultimately destroys himself and those around him. Iago is not a God, like Janus; therefore, he is not capable of possessing a double identity without being self-deceived. Iago is condemned when his mask is discovered; it turns out that others can see he is not the "honest Iago" he has appeared to be. However, Iago is not merely an evil character that causes harm; he also embodies a profound moral lesson: self-deception leads to destruction. Much of the scholarship determining whether Iago's intentions are truly evil dismisses the moralistic and philosophical approach behind his character. Shakespeare creates a character who illustrates a paradox, applicable to all of human existence, that gaining power or prestige rests upon destroying others. However, Iago's apparent self-deception regarding his own desires and his belief that he can only fulfill his agenda through others' ruination results in his own destruction.

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“Each in His Prison”: The Monstrous Interpersonal in Three T. S. Eliot Poems

ALLISON DELL OTTO

Taken as a triptych, T. S. Eliot’s poems “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” “Sweeney Erect,” and “The Waste Land” offer a compelling, disturbing set of theses regarding the possibilities of the interpersonal in the nascent Modernist age. The three poems, all written during or shortly after World War I, reflect the disillusionment and cynicism often found in works of the literary Modernist tradition. In particular, the possibility of meaningful interpersonal connection is markedly tenuous in the narratives contained in these works. “Prufrock” offers the first glimpse into Eliot’s apprehension about interpersonal relationships and focuses primarily on the disappointment of heterosexual romance. In “Sweeney Erect,” the interpersonal is maimed by violence and inhuman disinterest devoid of warmth or compassion. “The Waste Land,” the most expansive and the knottiest of the three poems, similarly presents a troubling mix of violence, hopelessness, and detachment in its portrayal of human connection. Set against the backdrop of the urban industrial landscape in the wake of a demoralizing, world-shaking war, this trio of poems depicts individual characters and their relationships with others as violent, unsettling, inhumane, and ultimately monstrous.

In *Monster Culture in the 21st Century*, theorists Marina Levina and Diem-My T. Bui explain, “Monster narratives…represent collective social anxieties over resisting and embracing change…They can be read as a response to a rapidly changing cultural, social, political, economic, and moral landscape” (1-2). Jeffrey Jerome Cohen adds that “The monstrum is etymologically ‘that which reveals,’ ‘that which warns’” (4). In “Monstrosity,” James Eli Adams writes, “Monsters are always with us. Whatever obscure psychic needs and anxieties monsters address, monstrosity more obviously helps to define the manifold meanings we attach to the idea of the human” (776). That is to say that the monsters we invent tell us about our specific historical context, our fears of the impending future, and who we think we are as humans. By examining the ways in which the interpersonal relationships drawn by Eliot are monstrous and by subsequently reading the relationships through the lens of contemporary monster theory, we gain not only a greater understanding of the poems themselves but also of Eliot’s situatedness in a particular historical moment, his perspective on what it means to be human, and his fears about the future. Published at the advent of the Modernist movement, these poems “present a snap-shot of humankind on the thin line between the bestial and the fully human and suggest the complex but fragile situation of human beings in the modern world” (Brooker 437).

As is characteristic of much of Eliot’s poetry, the narrative of “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” can be read in myriad ways. Is this a story of a man who has a wife but has lost interest in her and dreams of other women? Is Prufrock a loner, a virgin, what in contemporary culture we might refer to as an “incel,” who fantasizes about women but is too afraid (or, paradoxically, repelled) to approach one? Is the "you" (1) of the poem an already existing female partner or a potential future companion, or is Prufrock simply resorting to conversation with his own psyche in the depths of his loneliness? The poem has been read in all of these ways. However, in any of these cases, the negative state of the interpersonal is the same--and it is emphatic in its bleakness.

Prufrock is anxious and depressed, and he simultaneously desires and is disappointed by the female sexual or romantic company available to him. S. M. A. Rauf notes that Prufrock's "love of women is stale, lacking the warmth of affection…[and] sterile" (4). Prufrock chastens, "Oh, do not ask, 'What is it?'" (11), and readers may get a whiff of his annoyance at a woman's "nagging" (ostensibly caring or thoughtful) inquiry. His view of real-world women is barbed with a judgment and dissatisfaction that can only be called misogynistic. "In the room the women come and go / Talking of Michelangelo," he notes, in a tone that seems to mock what he sees as women's faux intellectual conversation (13-14; 35-36). The particular disenchantment he experiences when confronted with the reality of women is best expressed in the lines, "Arms that are braceleted and white and bare / [But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!]" (63-64). Here, the lamplight reveals the reality behind the fantasy--the arresting fact of a women's body hair when the adorned, porcelain-like fantasy arm is given a closer look. When he tries to get up the courage to approach a woman, be it wife or stranger ("'Do I dare?' and 'Do I dare?'" [38]), his inner voice cries, "[They will say: 'How his hair is growing thin!']...[They will say: 'But how his arms and legs are thin!']" (41, 44). Prufrock's disdain for the women he encounters is entangled with and thickened by his fear of their judgment of him.

The second half of the poem describes what Prufrock imagines might happen if he were to go through with a sexual act or emotional connection with a woman. He asks repeatedly, "And would it have been worth it, after all" (87, 99) and "Would it have been worth while" (90, 100, 106) if he had, after meals and tea and conversation, "force[d] the moment to its crisis?" (80). Also, though the setting is a bedroom, it remains unclear if this biting "off the matter with a smile" (91) refers to having sex or simply confiding in a woman in intimate conversation. But the imagined woman's response to either endeavor *is* clear and is emphasized by its repetition. Twice he envisions his female companion adjusting a pillow, throwing off a blanket, turning away from him to look out the window and saying, "'That is not what I meant at all. / That is not it, at all'" (97-98, 109-110). He fears intimacy in part because of the threat of her dejection, her rejection, her disappointment in him. These "Would it have been worth while" musings are followed by a stanza whose first word is the resounding, decisive, "No!" (111).

After this moment, Prufrock retreats to a world of fantasy, and real-life women do not appear again until the final line of the poem where they reemerge only to figure death. The fantasy women to whom he escapes are mermaids, and they (perhaps ideally) will not communicate with him. He lingers (129) near, hears, and watches them but "[does] not think that they will sing to [him]" (125). These mermaids who sing to each other but do not burden him with their "nagging" and arm hair like the women of the real world are objects of voyeuristic fantasy. And alas, the fantasy is destined to be interrupted. In the final line of the poem, Prufrock laments that those pestering "human voices wake us, and we drown" (131). Through the course of the poem, Prufrock narrates his misogynist, pessimistic exploration of the possibility of sexual or emotional connection with women and finally deems it undesirable and impossible. His attitude toward human women, which is at first laced with a kind of longing, grows more monstrous toward the close of the poem. In the end, it is characterized purely by disdain and hatred.

This cynicism regarding the interpersonal possibility takes a darker turn in 1919's "Sweeney Erect." An unsettling poem, "Sweeney" describes a man shaving, ignoring the fact that the sex worker with whom he has presumably just had intercourse is having a seizure on the bed behind him. Jewel Spears Brooker writes, "It is not immediately clear what is going on in this poem, but it is clear that violence is in the air" (428). In a kind of zoomorphosis characteristic of monster literature, Eliot likens Sweeney's body to an "orang-outang" (11) and paints him as a sort of primal man of the modern age, Neanderthal-like, unempathetic, hardened perhaps by urban industrial labor or by war. The description of the woman on the bed comes from Sweeney's perspective and is disturbingly violent and ugly. He describes her as "This withered root of knots of hair / Slitted below and gashed with eyes, / This oval O cropped out with teeth: / The sickle motion from the thighs" (13-16). The woman, the so-called "epileptic on the bed" (31), then begins the seizure during which she "[j]ackknifes upward at the knees" (17), her hands "clawing at the pillow slip" (20); she shrieks (30) and "Curves backward, clutching at her sides" (32). The fit she experiences is intensely violent, and even the description of her body is infused with language of a murderous threat, with words like "slitted," "gashed," "sickle," and "jackknife." Importantly, it is Sweeney who is holding a razor, testing it against his leg as she writhes, unattended. His wielding of the razor (a straight razor certainly has a phallic signification) suggests that he has done her some harm in this scene, or that he has caused her fit through an act of sexual violence. This situation is apparently routine for Sweeney, who seems to be a "regular" at the brothel (evinced by the fact that he is shaving there in the morning), unmoved by her brutal suffering; as he condescendingly, coarsely notes, he "[k]nows the female temperament" (23).

The view of heterosexual sexual relationships in "Sweeney Erect" is pessimistic, to say the least. And in a rare glimpse of women's relationships with each other, it is Doris, presumably another sex worker, who brings the smelling salts and brandy to revive or comfort Sweeney's victim (who goes conspicuously unnamed, relegating her to passive objecthood). Notably, though, Doris is in no hurry and exhibits no surprise or perturbation at the upsetting scene. She simply pads (42) in on bare feet, having taken the time to wrap herself in a towel and collect the "sal volatile" (43) and pour the brandy after hearing the screaming coming from

Sweeney's room. The other women in the brothel are even less sympathetic. With irony, Eliot describes the sex workers who, upon hearing the violent seizure, "Find themselves involved, disgraced, / Call witness to their principles / And deprecate the lack of taste" (34-36). Mrs. Turner, probably the madame of the brothel, only "intimates / It does the house no sort of good" (39-40). Her lamentation at the event is economic rather than humane. Sweeney has done some violence to the woman on the bed and then responds to her with disdain and disinterest. His cool, contemptuous disregard is mirrored by the women in this scene, who might have been compassionate allies of the epileptic. In the cold, monstrous, Modernist theatre of "Sweeney Erect," there is no possibility of empathy, care, or interpersonal tenderness.

In his tour de force, "The Waste Land," Eliot delivers the most multifaceted appraisal of human relationships. The alternating voices of the poem, which often are not clearly distinguished, frequently can make it hard to tell who is speaking to or about whom. That said, the first relationship we encounter in the poem is a pleasant one. "[W]e stopped in the colonnade, / And went on in sunlight...And drank coffee, and talked for an hour...And when we were children...he took me out on a sled, / And I was frightened. He said, Marie, / Marie, hold on tight. And down we went. / In the mountains, there you feel free" (9-17). But that glimmer of interpersonal warmth and connection quickly dissipates, giving way to the frigid world of the "Unreal City" (60, 208), where clairvoyants deal tarot cards of drowned sailors, hanged men, and "crowds of people, walking round in a ring" (43-56). It is as though that first interpersonal moment exists in the Romantic landscape of the past where there are sunlight and warm coffee, children sledding together and comforting each other, and where freedom is accessible through a connection with nature and the outdoors.
In the Unreal City of modernity, people are isolated and detached, with eyes fixed on their own feet, and relationships with other people are either one-sided, callous, or downright violent. One speaker calls out to someone he knows named Stetson, asking him about the "corpse [he] planted last year," trying to make conversation with a series of comments and questions, but Stetson never responds (69-76). Another speaker cries to an unknown someone, "'Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak. / 'What are you thinking of? What thinking? What? / 'I never know what you are thinking'" (112-14), again without any response or reciprocation. In what Judith Myers Hoover calls "the grim spiritual desert of 'The Waste Land,'" characters are calling out for other people, but not finding the connections they seek, like talking to the static at the other end of a telephone.

In a moment of actual human interaction, two women converse at a bar. But as was true of the women in "Sweeney Erect," their treatment of each other is largely unempathetic and chilly. Their dialogue reinforces sexist expectations of how women should look for their (cruel) husbands and portrays a petty competition between women for male attention, rather than comradery or commiseration (139-170). Furthermore, their conversation is repeatedly punctuated by the interruption of a booming male bartender yelling, "HURRY UP PLEASE ITS [*sic*] TIME" (141ff.).

Even when relationships between women (somewhat surprisingly) emerge in Eliot's poetry, they are represented as trivial, uncompassionate, and constantly penetrated by the patriarchy in the form of internalized misogynist values and the literal voice of the bartender.

The heterosexual relationship fairs no better in "The Waste Land." Perhaps the most disturbing scene in the poem is one that depicts an impersonal, aggressive sexual encounter between a typist and a "carbuncular" (231) young clerk who visits her apartment. "[S]he is bored and tired," the scene's narrator, Tiresias, observes (236). He

> Endeavours to engage her in caresses
> Which still are unreproved, if undesired.
> Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
> Exploring hands encounter no defence;
> His vanity requires no response,
> And makes a welcome of indifference." (237-242)

The sex here is one-sided and even makes itself available to a reading of sexual violence or rape. When the "assault" is over, the typist, seeming somewhat traumatized, remarks that she is "glad it's over" (252), smoothes her hair, and puts on a record in a daze. Sex, here, is an ugly, mechanical, impersonal embarrassment.

Thus, romantic love, compassionate friendship, and reciprocal, fulfilling sex are all strikingly absent in "The Waste Land," as they are in "Prufrock" and "Sweeney Erect." In their place, Eliot illustrates interpersonal moments as monstrosities characterized by cold detachment, hopeless misanthropy, and misogynistic violence. Cohen argues that the monster "is born at [a] metaphoric crossroads, as an embodiment of a certain cultural moment--of a time, a feeling, and a place" (4). So, what unique historical crossroads inspired Eliot to produce this interpersonal monster in his poetry? The first two and a half decades of the twentieth century witnessed the ravages of World War I, the entrenchment of industrialization and the alienation and inequality it bred, and the growth of divisive and terrifying nationalisms. Eliot's poetry contains monstrous forms of interpersonal disconnection that illuminate his fears about the impact those historical realities would have on the human species and our ways of relating to one another.

Eliot was deeply influenced by the violence of World War I, its monstrous monstrous death toll, and its effect on the soldiers who made it home, like his thoroughly traumatized brother-in-law Maurice. Brooker explains: "In wartime London . . . violence reached into every corner of civilian life, coloring and intensifying all aspects of personal life," and he tells us that Eliot referred to the war as "'the most awful nightmare of anxiety that the mind of man could conceive'" (424-426). She continues, "Violence has an indelible effect on intellectual and imaginative life, shaping one's understanding of human nature, forcing reflection on the human propensity to wound and destroy" (426). Indeed, the unfeeling, razor-wielding Sweeney, for one, is a clear product of an imagination grappling with the human capacity for violence. The unimaginable violence of the war had called into question the innately noble "great man" that Romanticism had celebrated, and Sweeney—the"insensitive and brutal beast"—is the monster that threatens to take his place in the twentieth century (Brooker 437).

The stronghold that industrialism had gained previous to the publication of these poems exacerbated the bleakness and alienation of English life under the war. The scene between the typist and the clerk in "The Waste Land" neatly embodies that historical moment's fears of how industrialization might affect people and their romantic and sexual relationships. The impersonal, intimacy-lacking, mechanical sexual encounter between these two characters eerily suggests that their bodies, souls, and ways of engaging with each other have been infected with the cold and machinic qualities of urban industrialism. Tellingly, the two are only referred to by the names of their occupations, which suggests that they lack identity beyond that of "worker." Arianna Frick writes that

> Eliot's portrayal of the typist and clerk suggests that sex is no longer for recreation, or even for procreation, but the recurring action of machinery preprogrammed and degraded […].Eliot would later critique the "tendency of unlimited industrialism…to create bodies of men and women…detached from tradition, alienated from religion." Given this context it is likely that Eliot's poem is criticizing the demoralizing effects of industrialism. (22-23)

Prufrock also feels like a product of this degrading industrialism. Importantly, Prufrock's narrative takes place in the isolating urban landscape, or as Hoover calls it, "the living death of the city" (15). She writes, "Prufrock's solitary fate, of course, is more the rule than the exception in the cold and anonymous hell of city life" (16). When we read Eliot's poetry as at least in part a critique of industrialism, Prufrock's interpersonal monstrousness can be viewed as a result of the "the spiritual alienation" (Hoover 14) and isolation of urban life and the "emptiness and alienation of industrialized gender roles" (Frick 24) that many (especially in the Romantic tradition) viewed as threatening to relationship-building, marriage, and meaningful family life.

Upon close inspection, we can also see in these poems the looming presence of the nationalisms that Eliot would have seen growing like a malignancy around him in the years like a malignancy around him in the years immediately following the war. The massive death tolls of the war and the Spanish flu epidemic and the growing nationalist movements that promoted "racial purity" both focused new and special attention on the importance of reproduction. Thus, the women *and* sex itself in these poems are dehumanized, demoralized, and mechanical, as sexuality was increasingly figured in national and nationalist narratives as the domain of mass-production and politics. Furthermore, as Puoneh Saeedi argues, nationalisms and the segregationist, separatist rhetoric their supporters employed splintered masses of people, who may have once seen themselves as more unified, into isolated, distrustful factions. "The apocalypse portrayed by Eliot comes in the wake of … the rupture of universal unity," and the "disunity felt by human beings towards their surroundings" in urban industrialized society (Saeedi 9). Eliot's characters and their non-relationships with each other reflect that fracturing.

In a word, characters like Sweeney, Doris, Prufrock, the typist, and the clerk, as well as their interpersonal interactions, are *uncanny*. They appear to be human but eerily lack human warmth, empathy, and feeling. They are machine-like, coolly contemptuous, and detached. Their relationships are soulless, mechanical, and tinged with indifferent violence. They look like us—but a dark, unnerving version of us. Brandy Ball Blake and L. Andrew Cooper write, "Some of the most terrifying monsters are those with primarily human attributes. They emphasize the similarity between the monstrous and the human, and thus they comment on the behaviors of humankind" (4). The characters and interpersonal (dis)connections that Eliot imagines in these poems are monstrous *and* they are human. Many monsters *do not* look like humans and are meant to warn us about the dangers of difference. But humanoid monsters force us to reflect on who we are *as humans*, especially in the face of intense historical change. "The uncanny is a kind of haunting proximity," explain Levina and Bui. The monster is a funhouse mirror, casting back a vision of who we are and who we might become.

The scenes of the interpersonal in these poems are void of sympathy, of fraternity, of all the qualities that the Romantics put forth as constituting humanness itself. Men and women are intensely isolated here, and the relationships they do engage in are creepily uncanny in their lack of human warmth. "This picture of human nature is inseparable from Eliot's personal attempt to understand his own moment in history—not in the abstract, but in the bedroom of his flat, in his office at Lloyd's Bank, in shell-shocked London," contends Brooker (437). The urban industrial post-war landscape to which Modernism responds, ominously dotted on the horizon as it was by the rise of nationalisms, threatened to produce a disturbing kind of interpersonal relationship that provoked fear and hopelessness. Eliot's characters and their (dis)engagement with each other "straddles the human and subhuman" and portends the proliferation of disconnection and alienation (Brooker 429). When we read the interpersonal relationships in these texts as monstrous, they can be seen as embodying and amplifying the cultural moment between Romanticism and Modernism and the historical moment between the two world wars, as well as the fears that accompany those moments. The collected "body" of the interpersonal here, (e.g, the *physical* manifestation of the interpersonal in the sexual encounters in "Sweeney" and the typist scene) "incorporates the fear, desire, anxiety, and fantasy" of that cultural and historical moment in the way that Cohen argues the monster's body always does (4).

Eliot's poems and the monstrosities contained within them respond to the changing world and explore the fear of how war and urban industrialism transforms human beings and our ways of relating to one another. Some of these characters literally call out for connection; some seek relationships and desire sex. But they also operate like shells of humans, assaulting one another and treating each other with disdain, contempt, and frightening indifference. In the final section of "The Waste Land," Eliot writes, "We think of the key / each in his prison" (414). Alone and alienated, the post-war industrial subject imagines the interpersonal but cannot connect. These characters exist at a cultural and historical crossroads: wanting or at least being programmed to seek the kinds of human connection that Romanticism promised and celebrated, but performing like Modernism's robotic, isolated cogs in the post-war industrial capitalist machine. Thus, the monstrous interpersonal relationships in these poems embody the anxieties about human isolation that circulated in Eliot's Modernist moment, our capacity for violence, the deterioration of traditional values, and the corresponding inevitable transformations in sex, love, and friendship. Like all good monsters, the uncanny interpersonal in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "Sweeney Erect," and "The Waste Land" reveals a great deal about what we think it means to be human and warns us of the consequences of losing that humanity.

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The Holy Sinner: Sofya Marmeladov as an Archetype of Mary Magdalene in Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*

AMANDA JIANG

In Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, the reader meets Sofya (Sonya) Marmeladov—a daughter, a prostitute, and the partner of Raskolnikov. George Pattison calls her a "holy anorexic," a popular figure of the good-hearted prostitute who, despite her external circumstances, still maintains purity and moral goodness (49). Sonya's biblical counterpart is Mary Magdalene, who is well known for witnessing Jesus's Resurrection. For some, Mary Magdalene is the "Woman Who Knew the All," the one who grasped the full meaning of Jesus. For others, she is a sinful prostitute—"the sinner in the city" (Dalarun 33-34). Sonya Marmeladov, too, embodies these contradictory traits. Her presence in Raskolnikov's life is vital in that she completes the cycle of crime and punishment. Dostoevsky's novel establishes Sonya Marmeladov as an archetype of Mary Magdalene, whose sole influence revives Raskolnikov from spiritual death; without her, Raskolnikov would not have confessed or sought redemption.

Mary Magdalene is a composite of three distinct biblical figures: Mary of Magdala, Mary of Bethany, and the anonymous sinner who moistens Christ's feet with her tears (Dalarun 32). Mary Magdalene first appears in a brief passage from Luke's Gospel (8:1-3). Mary Magdalene most likely sought Jesus out on her own, crossed rock roads on foot, possessed by demons, her clothing in tatters (Chilton 1). More specifically, Mary Magdalene looked for Jesus when he became known in Galilee as a rabbi who wanted to heal sinners through exorcisms.

Mary was considered unclean in the society of Jewish Galilee, a condition which later encouraged the Western tradition depicting her as a prostitute, though there is nothing in the Gospels that suggests this. According to Chilton, "Typical paintings portray her in lavish dress, arranging herself in front of a mirror, or abased in shame at Jesus' feet. Medieval piety associated vanity with prostitution, on the grounds that women sold themselves only because they enjoyed whoring" (8). The image of Mary Magdalene as a prostitute is further promoted by the story of Mary of Egypt, who is a classic Christian folklore figure—the "whore turned ascetic" (Chilton 9).

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[1] Karen Ralls posits, "As is clear from the earlier Gnostic scriptures, [Mary Magdalene] was also envisaged by some as the Woman Who Knew the All, as the one who may perhaps have best understood and ultimately grasped the full message of Jesus in his time, as an inspiring teacher, and as a purveyor of wisdom" (9).

[2] "Soon Afterwards [Jesus] went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Johanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources" (Luke 8:1-3).

Under the influence of Christ, Mary of Egypt gave up prostitution during a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the fourth century and lived in a cave thereafter. Her tale is inserted into Mary Magdalene's biography.

In order for Mary Magdalene to have a place in the patriarchal religious narrative, she has to be sexualized. In such a way, Mary Magdalene holds "the spectrum of human behavior, from degradation to the height of religious fervor" (Chilton 20). She is often depicted nude in the rocks of La Saint-Baume. Her long and lustrous hair covers parts of the body—a behavior that fulfills standards of modesty—making Mary Magdalene the Lady Godiva of Christian spirituality.

After Jesus performed exorcisms on Mary Magdalene, she became one of his most faithful disciples.[3] She was granted three gifts of the Spirit: the abilities to exorcise, anoint, and perceive the truth of Resurrection. Jesus taught his disciples the practice of exorcism. Exorcism is "a window into how Rabbi Jesus understood the role of divine Spirit in the world" (Chilton 26). Jesus called demons "unclean spirits" and thought people, without the presence of these "unclean spirits," were as clean as God had made Adam and Eve. One's "impurity" was not the result of one's contact with exterior objects; rather, impurity was the contamination of one's own spirit. To Jesus, uncleanness derived from the "disturbed desire people conceived to pollute and do harm to themselves" (26). Having witnessed many acts of exorcism, Mary utilized the acquired skills to heal sinners.[4]

The second gift is anointment. Through the practice of anointment, Mary Magdalene becomes associated with the anonymous sinner that appears in the Gospel of Luke (7:36-50). At the home of Simon the Pharisee, she moistened Christ's feet with her tears and anointed them with perfume. The woman was called "a sinner" and "a sinful woman," labels that connote sexual motives. Dalarun posits, "Mary Magdalene is described as a 'sinner in the city,' and in the Middle Ages everyone understood that her sins were of the flesh, that she was a prostitute" (33). Initially a sinner, it was through the act of sinning that Mary achieved redemption. After anointing Christ, she became the forgiven and, later, the forgiver, for she carried on the practice of anointing other sinners.

Out of all the gifts received, the holy vision was the one that differentiated Mary Magdalene from other disciples. Scholars have traced Mary Magdalene's

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[3] According to Bruce Chilton, "the multiple exorcisms that Mary underwent probably took about a year, and it was through this process that she emerged as one of Jesus' key disciples" (26).

[4] Mary Magdalene's experience with demons refined Jesus's practice of exorcism. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus recognized the effect of serial possession after the reference to Mary's possession: "When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it wanders through waterless regions looking for a resting place, but not finding any, it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' When it comes, it finds it swept and put in order. Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and live there; and the last state of that person is worse than the first" (Luke 11:24-26).

lineage back to Mary of Bethany, Lazarus's sister. According to the Bible, Mary wasnext to Lazarus when Jesus revived him from death (John 11). Therefore, Mary Magdalene is a holy testament to Lazarus's spiritual and bodily revival. If Jesus is the one who forgives, then Mary Magdalene, his faithful disciple, must also provide the key to redemption. At Christ's Resurrection, Mary was one of the first witnesses. According to the Gospel of Luke, Mary Magdalene, along with two other women, went with Jesus on his last journey to Jerusalem (8:1-2). They witnessed Jesus's Crucifixion and stayed at the foot of the cross until the body of Jesus was taken down and placed in a tomb on land owned by Joseph, who came from the Judean town of Arimathea (23:49-56). On the next day, the women returned to the tomb with spices they had prepared the night before, expecting to find a corpse that they could anoint. When they entered, they could not find the body of Jesus. Instead, they were met with two "gleaming" male figures, who insisted that Jesus had risen (24:1-12).[5]

Unlike in the Gospel of Luke, in the Gospels of Mark and John Mary Magdalene was the first to see the empty tomb, witness the risen Christ, and tell other disciples about the Resurrection (Ralls 16). The emptying of the tomb adds value to Jesus's Resurrection. Harriet Muray suggests, "It is the absence of the body, its disappearance and not its preservation, that signifies the Resurrection" (50). Equally important, too, is the presence of a witness who perceives the absence. Thus, Mary Magdalene completes the cycle of revival, for her redemptive vision validates Jesus' Resurrection and confirms the possibility of salvation.

In *Crime and Punishment*, Sonya Marmeladov is, like Mary Magdalene, a controversial, yet significant, figure. Through her spiritual connection with Christ, Sonya is granted redemptive gifts akin to those of Mary Magdalene; her purity and selflessness illuminate divine humanity for those around her. Sonya is first mentioned in the novel when her father—Marmeladov—speaks of her sacrifices: "The first time my only daughter went on the streets I too went…(for my daughter is a street-walker, sir)" (11). Sonya sells her body to feed her downtrodden siblings and mother. She even gives money to her alcoholic father. On the first night, after selling herself, Sonya gives thirty silver roubles to Katerina Ivanovna.[6] Biblically, the thirty roubles allude to the thirty pieces of silver for which Judas betrayed Jesus.[7]

Sonya views her occupation as a betrayal to Christ. However, Sonya is, by no

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[5] In Luke 24, the women saw two men in clothes, gleaming like angels, who said to them, "Who do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee."

[6] "She came in and went straight to Katerina Ivanovna and laid thirty silver roubles on the table in front of her without a word" (15).

[7] "Then one of the twelve [disciples], who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, 'What will you give me if I betray [Jesus] to you?' They paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he began to look for an opportunity betray him" (Matthew 26: 14-16).

means, a Judas-like figure. Rather, she is more so a holy sinner—a Mary Magdalene archetype—than a traitor, for she selflessly places her family's well-being above her own, even though the action contaminates her own body. Her sins are, thus, neutralized by her caring and loving stature.

Like Mary Magdalene, Sonya's body is sexualized, yet her soul is pure. Peter Luzhin calls Sonya "the girl of notorious conduct," but his words are undermined by Sonya's unyielding faith (200). When Raskolnikov first meets her in person, Sonya is approaching her father, who is dying. Raskolnikov describes her:

> from under [her] hat, worn with a boyish tilt to one side, looked out a thin, pale, frightened little face; the mouth hung open and the eyes stared in terrified fixity. Sonya was small, about eighteen years old, thin but quite pretty, with fair hair and remarkable blue eyes. […] She was breathless with the speed of her arrival. At length the whispering among the crowd, or some of the words said, seemed to reach her ears; she cast down her eyes, took a step across the threshold and stood inside the room, but still very near the door. (157)

Sonya's spiritual purity is expressed through her angelic appearance; her fair hair and "remarkable" blue eyes embody Christian dignity. She is young—a girl of only eighteen years—but also mature. The term "remarkable" highlights Sonya's worthiness and places emphasis on her unconventionality: her inner innocence juxtaposes the public's "words" of shame, which are aimed to denounce her role as a prostitute. Although she is tormented by her career, she is not ruined by prostitution.

When Marmeladov first sees Sonya on his deathbed, he inquires, "Who is that? Who is it?" (158). At this moment, Sonya transforms into a soothing saint, a "savior figure" who understands that there is meaning and comfort in death (Pattison 49). Initially, Marmeladov has difficulty comprehending the vision that appears in front of him because he is unable to identify with Sonya's holiness. His final comprehension is accompanied by revelation and the desire for forgiveness. Sonya's presence at Marmeladov's deathbed eliminates his pride and encourages him to seek repentance. He cries to her, "Sonya! Daughter! Forgive me!" (159). Marmeladov, then, dies in Sonya's arms. Embodying the vision of Mary Magdalene, Sonya is the witness to Marmeladov's last rites of confession.

As an archetype of Mary Magdalene, Sonya Marmeladov similarly possesses the ability to help others exorcise their demons. In *Crime and Punishment*, Sonya is the sole figure who recognizes and challenges Raskolnikov's demon. Raskolnikov's motive to kill and lie is caused by the devil—the impurity—within him. The impurity triggers symptoms that make him "not to be himself. He was unable to stay in one place for more than a moment or concentrate his attention on any one object; his thoughts cut across one another; he talked incoherently; his hands trembled slightly" (442). Aligned with Jesus's vision that impurity originates from an evil desire, Raskolnikov's impurity, too, contains his most sinful and ugly ambitions. He confesses to Sonya the reason for murdering the pawnbroker:

> I longed to kill without casuistry, to kill for my own benefit, and for that alone! I would not lie about it even to myself! I did not commit murder in order to use the profit and power I gained to make myself a benefactor to humanity. Rubbish! I simply murdered; I murdered for myself, for myself alone […]. I needed to experience something different, something else was pushing me along: what I needed to find out then [was] whether I was capable of stepping over the barriers or not. (354)

Raskolnikov's repetitive "I" reflects his growing selfishness—the evil that condones spiritual degeneration. The devil within him is not capable of being a "benefactor to humanity" because it feeds on the love of self. While Raskolnikov's murderous motive harms others, the damage is mutual, for the cultivation of impurities cause Raskolnikov, himself, to become a victim. Sonya, on the other hand, is selfless: she lives to love others. Unlike Raskolnikov, she is not fickle and does not need to experience something "different." The Mary Magdalene archetype is a faithful follower of Christ—and of God—and is, thus, the only means through which Raskolnikov can expel his devil and embrace spirituality.

A vital aspect of the practice of exorcism is the willingness of the victim to listen to the exorcist's command. The word *exorcise* (*exorkizo* in Mark's Greek) means to adjure or "to bind with an oath" (Chilton 37), which is also the purpose of an exorcism. The oath is a formula that the exorcist utilizes to force the demon to listen to his or her command. Sickened by the demon within himself, Raskolnikov begs Sonya to tell him what he should do now (354). She responds with a command: "Go at once, this instant, stand at the cross-roads, first bow down and kiss the earth you have desecrated, then bow to the whole world, to the four corners of the earth, and say aloud to all the world: 'I have done murder.' Then God will send you life again" (355). Sonya's command revolves around the image of the "cross-roads," a symbol of redemption and one that "incorporates both positive and negative religious symbolism" (Tucker 225). The crossroads is associated with the cross and the Orthodox Church and, simultaneously, the world of evil spirits. Mark Kidel posits, "[the crossroads] is a point of decision and transition that many cultures recognize as a dangerous place" (qtd in Tucker 225). Therefore, when Sonya tells Raskolnikov to kiss the crossroads, she is not only commanding him to kiss the cross but also the meeting point of the evil and the good. Ultimately, Raskolnikov must confront the devil inside himself before he can expel it.

Raskolnikov kisses the earth prior to confessing his murder to the public: "He knelt in the middle of the square, bowed to the ground, and kissed its filth with pleasure and joy. He raised himself and then bowed down a second time" (445). The gesture of kneeling conveys a sense of surrender, but Raskolnikov's own agency does not minimize the influence that Sonya has on him. When he bows to the ground for the second time, he sees Sonya "standing fifty yards away from him on his left" (445). Sonya's proximity hints at the essence of an exorcism: the practice is spiritual yet physical. The exorcist cannot physically disconnect from the person who is possessed by demons, or else the practice will prove futile. In the novel, Sonya consistently strives to have both a spiritual and a physical presence in Raskolnikov's life. Raskolnikov follows Sonya's command exactly and thoroughly—ending with his confession that he was the one "*who killed the old woman and her sister, Lizaveta, with an axe, and robbed them*" (450). Dostoevsky's choice to italicize Raskolnikov's words further stresses the significance of the confession: the words are not only coming out of Raskolnikov's mouth but also his soul—his most honest words are also the most sacred. Without Sonya, Raskolnikov would not have spoken the truth with such a conviction.

After Raskolnikov's demon has been exorcised, his resurrection begins in the epilogue. The epilogue, by definition, is synonymous with the concept of salvation, for the word comes directly from the Greek *epilogos*, of the *logos*—the embodiment of the Word of Christ (Tucker 212). While Raskolnikov has not yet achieved full redemption in the epilogue, he is working toward obtaining salvation. According to Chilton, "Resurrection implies that an element of human identity does not disappear at death […]. A person who loves another, who incarnates this indestructible element, loves God at the same time" (65). Chilton's proposition is further reinforced and validated by these biblical verses: "And so we know and rely on the love God has to us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them" (1 John 4:16). In this way, Sonya employs her gift of redemption to prompt Raskolnikov's resurrection through the knowledge of God's love.

The concept that God is manifested in those who live in love is depicted through Sonya's role as an archetype of Mary Magdalene. As noted in *Crime and Punishment*:

> There was one question which [Raskolnikov] could not answer: why was Sonya so well liked by everybody? She did not try to ingratiate herself with them; they rarely met her […]. When their relatives came to the town, the convicts told them to leave goods and even money for them in Sonya's care […]. They would take off their caps and bow to her. 'Little mother,' these coarse, branded criminals would say to the slight little creature […]. They even went to her when they were ill. (460-461)

Sonya is well liked by everybody because she is tender with her affection and she forgives.[8] These, too, are the qualities of Mary Magdalene and of God. Sonya's

[8] Suggested by Cynthia Bourgeault in *The Meaning of Mary Magdalene* (159). Mary Magdalene also embodies these traits.

lack of physical proximity with the convicts does not eliminate her spiritual presence in their lives. They call her "Little mother," which is a reminder of Sonya's holiness. Anthony Johae posits: her first name, Sofya, which means wisdom, harbors in it "the potential for a radical transformation of surface representation (Sonya, the prostitute, but who is called 'little mother' by the convicts) into a profoundly metaphysical meaning (Sonya: Mother Church)" (179). Hence, holiness lives inside her. While Sonya provides love and faith to others, she also dwells within her love for God (Tucker 119). Thus, by loving Sonya, Raskolnikov is also cherishing the Christian faith that lives in her.

In order to resurrect, one not only needs to accept the presence of love, but also become entirely receptive to it. Theologian Cynthia Bourgeault argues that this can be achieved through the method of *kenosis*. Kenosis derives from the Greek verb *kenosein*, which means to empty oneself. The term was first applied to Jesus by Paul: "Though his state was that of God, / yet he did not deem equality with God / something that he should cling to. / Rather, he emptied himself[9] / and assuming the state of a slave / he was born in human likeness" (Phillippians 2:6-7). *Kenosis* is not synonymous with renunciation. Bourgeault contends, "Renunciation implies a subtle pushing away; *kenosis* is simply the willingness to let things come and go without grabbing on […]. The 'letting go' of *kenosis* is actually closer to 'letting be'" (104). In *Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov performs the act of *kenosis* by stripping himself of his ego: "How it happened [Raskolnikov] himself did not know, but suddenly he seemed to be seized and cast at [Sonya's] feet. He clasped her knees and wept" (463). When Raskolnikov weeps, he becomes more human—more vulnerable, yet also more open to giving and receiving love, which aligns with the purpose of *kenosis*, that is, the return of the self to human form (Bourgeault 103). Through Sonya's love, Raskolnikov is raised from spiritual death.

Sonya, a holy sinner, is the sole reason that Raskolnikov repents because she is a beacon of light and love through the darkness of his evil. Just as Mary Magdalene stood as a witness to and receiver of Christ's love, Sonya's empathy provides comfort for the suffering; her presence forges a bridge between sinners and God's love. In the end of *Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov and Sonya "were both pale and thin, but in their white sick faces there glowed the dawn of a new future, a perfect resurrection into a new life. Love had raised them from the dead, and the heart of each held endless springs of life for the heart of the other" (463).

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[9] Cynthia Bourgeault mentions that this is the place where the verb *kenosein* appears (102).

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The Speaker's Desire for Immortality in Shakespeare's Sonnets

ROBERTO PACHECO

A great work of poetry reflects the relationship between writer and muse, admirer and beloved, creation and beauty. Additionally, there frequently exists an underlying, hidden message among the eloquent trappings of the writer's imagination. Often, the poet's intention is to eternalize the object of desire to perpetuate the poet's own existence. One could argue that in his sonnets, William Shakespeare's Speaker is similarly motivated. In poems such as Sonnet 115, "Time's tyranny" (9) will not only take the muse's beauty and the Poet's own mortality, but also the Poet's ability to contain his beloved and to hoard the beauty he so enjoys. When considering the concepts of love and beauty as expressed in Plato's *Symposium*, the Shakespeare's sonnets are not about preserving the beauty of the Youth (Sonnets 1-126) or expressing disdain for his mistress (Sonnets 127-152) but are instead a much deeper search for self-contentment and, ultimately, personal immortality. The Speaker's goal is to eternalize the beauty of his subjects while preserving the Speaker's own memory within both his muses and in the poems.

Among the many elements of a love sonnet, one is the ultimate act of devotion and admiration, and another is a means of preserving either the muse, the work itself, or both. In Shakespeare's sonnets, beauty and time are in constant conflict. The Poet's muse, that is, his source of inspiration, the physical representation of what he believes is beautiful and good about the world, is in danger of fading away: "In these sonnets the poet maintains a fixed attitude towards the friend, that of formal, somewhat distant admiration, together with a concern for what in the long-range view the friend must suffer along with the rest of creation under the tyranny of time" (Kaula 46). Furthermore, the Speaker projects his own aspirations onto the Youth, who, in the Speaker's eyes, is a deity or "the world's fresh ornament" (1.9), a fleeting gift to the world whose beauty reminds the Poet of his own mortality. The Youth's beauty in time will fade away, as will the Poet's ability to enjoy it. The aging of the muse and the death of the Poet make time the chief concern of the sonnets. Therefore, poetry is the means by which the Poet overcomes both conflicts of time and beauty, as stated in Sonnet 19: "Yet do thy worst, old Time, despite thy wrong, My love shall in my verse ever live young" (13-14). The addressee of these sonnets, the Young Man, is encouraged to procreate in order to extend and preserve his beauty. Thus, the procreation sonnets, as well as sonnet 18 and 19, are commonly viewed as evidence of the Poet's principal motive to preserve the Youth. However, although the apparent purpose of the "procreation sonnets" is to prolong the muses' existence, the interior struggle within the Poet is also apparent.

Though the “procreation sonnets” incline the reader to believe that the Poet’s focus is the flattery and preservation of his muse, Sonnet 22, for example, reveals the Poet’s desires to be, as in Plato’s *Symposium*, complete, eternal, and in possession of the beautiful. In Plato’s work, Aristophanes describes “love” both as the union of souls and as “the name for our pursuit of wholeness, for our desire to be complete” (191A-193A). This concept can be applied to the Young Man sonnets, in which the Speaker sees the Youth as his other half. Furthermore, the Speaker sees what he wants to become as the Youth exposes what he, the Speaker, lacks: “For all that beauty that doth cover thee / Is but the seemly raiment of my heart, / Which in thy breast thy live, as thine in me” (5-7). The Speaker proposes the idea of exchanging hearts in order to satiate his desires: to be young, beautiful, and eternal. Sonnet 22 reveals that he is afraid of aging, of being considered unattractive, and of losing his beloved. The Speaker reveals, “Certainly while I love you loving me, I find myself in you thinking about me, and I recover myself, lost by myself through my own negligence, in you, preserving me. You do the same in me” (Langley 73). Here, the Speaker tries to convince the Youth of an interdependence between them. He will keep the subject both young and beautiful through poetic verse; the muse in return will do the same by associating with the Speaker: “My glass shall not fade persuade me I am old, / So long as Youth and thou are of one date” (1-2). As a result, the Speaker and Youth will be of the same age if they remain one. The mutual dependence, however, depends on containing the Platonic idea of the beautiful.

Beauty is responsible for all beautiful things. In the *Symposium*, to love an individual’s beauty is to love all forms of the beautiful: “A lover first falls in love with a single beautiful body, which inspires him to give birth to beautiful ideas” (xx). In addition, this idea reveals that a lover is more devoted to the joys of beauty which accompany the beloved rather than the beloved himself. Plato’s discussion of forms is found within the language of Poet; he enjoys the beauty of his muse because it inspires the creation of other beautiful subjects. Therefore, in the Platonic sense, the Poet does not love the Young Man so much as the *inspiration* the Young Man creates in him. The child that the Youth is encouraged to have is not with a woman, but with the Poet: “The poet’s brain is the womb made fertile by his noble subject-matter, which brings forth sonnets as the subject babies” (Duncan-Jones 56); that is, the creation of the sonnets as their intellectual child links the Poet and his beloved.

However, the Poet and his muse are not connected emotionally. The Poet only utilizes his muse to create further pleasures for himself, to create more sources of the beautiful to feed upon. Their apparent mutual desire to contain the beautiful is what binds them and makes the poet-muse relationship work: “The adoption of eternalizing rhyme as the vehicle, enabling exclusive interaction between the maker and receiving subject, suggest an intensification of the protagonist’s love, as it is born of and nourished by beauty, its amorous character” (Pequigney 20). The Poet’s offer of immortalizing youth is not an exclamation of his unwavering devotion to his subject. On the contrary, it highlights the Poet’s resolve to obtain the beautiful. The muse is just a gatekeeper that separates the Poet from the beautiful. Immortalization is the Poet's "vehicle," a Trojan horse that allows him to invade and purge what he desires. Without a doubt, the real force within the sonnets is Beauty, not the subject, as Beauty is the principle motivation for all parties involved. The Young Man seems to possess the key to the Speaker's contentment, but to love and possess Beauty is to long for happiness, the ultimate good for the self, not for the subjects of his poems.

Although the Speaker seeks to contain the beautiful, he is misguided in his search for beautiful objects, the Young Man being the good and the Dark Lady being a false beauty. In the Young Man the Poet searches for deeper non-sexual and everlasting love that can transcend time. In the Dark Lady, he searches for a temporal love based on immediate gratification of bodily lust, a false good. However, what the Speaker longs for is everlasting happiness; he is searching for the good. As F. C. White notes, "Socrates [asserts] that all human beings experience love in the forgoing sense of love: all desire the permanent possession of the good and they desire this for themselves" (367). Furthermore, White proposes that the search for the good clarifies the notion that carnal pleasure is the goal of the lover. Physical beauty that leads to carnal desire is a false good because it is only temporary. Sonnet 137 demonstrates that the Speaker claims to know what beauty is, but also admits that his eyes may deceive him. The Speaker recognizes that her beauty, which germinates lust and envy, will only hurt him. He longs for extended happiness that is not only everlasting but also independent of external factors. Therefore, the Speaker seeks love in all the wrong places with the Dark Lady.

What the Poet seeks is true happiness for himself, not eternal life for his vain muse or fidelity from his mistress. White's interpretation of Diatoma's idea of love supports this claim: "Love, she explains, is not what some have suggested, not the seeking of one's half, since the *good* is what human beings love. […] More properly, what human beings love is that the good be in their possession forever: the object of their love, what their love is 'of,' is the permanent possession for themselves of the good" (367). Furthermore, a person who has complete "possession" of the good has achieved self-mastery. He has escaped the mortal shackles of the living and has entered into the realm of the immortals. In the case of the Sonnets, the search for immortality is the ultimate goal of the Speaker.

The reader is led to believe that the Poet longs for the Youth. Unlike the love, or lust, he feels for the Dark Lady, the Poet does not demonstrate a sexual longing for the Young Man. Instead, he feels admiration because in the eyes of the Poet the subject possesses beauty, the good. In the Platonic sense, the Speaker is hoarding the beautiful, the good, with the hidden desire to be complete and eternal, using "earthly" bodies as building blocks to obtain a more divine form of beauty, an absolute beauty. Therefore, the Young Man sonnets are written to secure the love of the beautiful, the good—everlasting happiness that centers on the self. The Dark Lady sonnets, on the other hand, represent the opposite side of the good—false, insatiable, and temporal desires. Beauty is a longing for immortality, and poetry is the means by which the

Speaker obtains immortality and contains the beautiful. Though the Speaker never succeeds in conquering both his muses, he manages to steal their essence in the poetry, eternalizing himself in verse.

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The Justified Punishments of Dr. Victor Frankenstein and Humbert Humbert

ALISA SCOTT

A conflict's advancement within a novel is the direct result of a protagonist's decision-making process. When an antihero is motivated by his or her vices, he or she may demonstrate a story's deeper meaning while negatively impacting other characters. The protagonists of *Frankenstein* and *Lolita*, Dr. Victor Frankenstein and Humbert Humbert, worsen their struggles by traumatizing the Creature and Dolores Haze. Though the protagonists' treatment of their victims is significantly different, with Frankenstein depriving affection and Humbert providing excessive, immoral affection, their conditioning ultimately results in violent outbursts inflicted by trauma. In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, the Creature and Dolores Haze serve as punishment for the novels' anti-hero protagonists because they are misguided victims who respond appropriately to their captor's vices.

Dr. Victor Frankenstein's unwavering ambition is driven by a desire to create life without aid from a supernatural force. Victor craves validation from a scientific endeavor, declaring, "no father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve their's" (33). Eventually, he is forced to acknowledge his flawed skill. After first observing the Creature, "the beauty of the dream vanished," and Victor's pride is diminished (36). Chris Baldick states, "The parts, in a living being, can only be as beautiful as the animating principle which organizes them.... [I]n Victor's creation, from tormented isolation and guilty secrecy, the resulting assembly will only... display its moral ugliness" (175). Victor Frankenstein victimizes the Creature by avoiding responsibility and willfully causing harm. The Creature is genuinely distraught, stating, "feeling pain invade me on all sides, I sat down and wept" (70). Frankenstein presents himself as a prideful, self-distinguished individual, a character deserving of the novel's conflict.

Unlike Dr. Frankenstein, Humbert Humbert displays zealous adoration for his victim. After first seeing her, he says, "I find it most difficult to express with adequate force that flash, that shiver, that impact of passionate recognition" (39). Humbert's attraction to prepubescent girls has led him to commit unjustifiable perversion, and he presents himself as a disturbing character who is also deserving of the novel's conflict. As Charles Mitchell notes, "The beautiful female is the ideal alter self which the male longs to become or to unite with through sexual ritual" (330). Since he never finishes copulating with Annabel Leigh as a young boy, Humbert uses Dolores as a medium to indulge in his lust; he reveals "that little girl with her seaside limbs and ardent tongue haunted me ever since- until at last, twenty-four years later, I broke her spell by incarnating her in another" (15). Mitchell continues: "In despair, man rejects his finite limitations... by inventing an image of his infinite self, thereby creating or recreating himself" (329). Since Humbert has been consistently limited by societal rules, he is relieved by Dolores. Similar to Frankenstein's Creature, Dolores Haze is

Humbert's creation and the adaptation of an ideal sexual partner.

Though Frankenstein and Humbert inflict harm differently, the Creature and Dolores Haze's reactions are strikingly similar. Despite being presented as traumatized victims who endure the vices of their captors in isolation, it can be argued that they also act as the novels' antagonists. Frankenstein's creation focuses on punishing the doctor throughout the plot: "I will work at your destruction... so that you curse the hour of your birth" (102). The Creature is the epitome of a brute despite displaying a profound, human-like consciousness and sense of morality: "Although Shelley does not ground her Monster in reality, she does use the Monster as a way to reveal how human social acceptance has the power to determine the outcome of an individual's life" (Lancaster 134). The Creature resorts to violence because he is reminded of his poor experience with Frankenstein's immediate rejection, allowing these feelings to resurface and manifest after being rejected by the De Lacey family. He recounts, "he dashed me to the ground, and struck me violently with a stick. I could have torn him limb from limb... But my heart sunk within me as with bitter sickness, and I refrained" (95). By sparing Felix, a stranger who beats him, and murdering William, an innocent child who is only guilty by association, the Creature sheds his victim complex by strategically deciding how he will cause others harm.

The Monster's actions begin to complement his physical appearance and validate Victor's initial disgust. Though the Creature is undoubtedly wrong, he is more of a disregarded victim than an antagonist: "Unfeeling, heartless creator! you had endowed me with perceptions and passions, and then cast me abroad... for scorn and horror of mankind" (98). Even after realizing his creation's proclivity for violence, Frankenstein chooses to worsen the plot's conflict by continuing to deprive the Creature of affection. The doctor is disappointingly self-absorbed. William's death and Justine's indirect murder reveal the innate evil of homicide, but Elizabeth's murder was not an irrational act. If the Creature is not allowed to receive redemption or partake in an exchange of humanizing love, the individual who deprives him is unworthy of such affection.

Dolores Haze does not terrorize other characters in *Lolita*, as does Frankenstein's Monster, but she still has observable, antagonistic qualities. While residing in the Haze family's home, Humbert begins to initiate subtle and extreme sexual exploration. On one occasion, he admits to secretly touching Dolores's bare back through her shirt while speaking with Charlotte. His experiences become more explicit: "every movement she made, every shuffle and ripple, helped me to... improve the secret system of tactile correspondence... between my gagged, bursting beast and the beauty of her dimpled body in its cotton frock" (59). After his nymphet leaves for summer camp, Humbert's sexual frustration worsens, and his love life is reduced to the "repugnant flesh of Charlotte which Humbert repeatedly but involuntarily possessed" (Michell 331). Dolores's antagonistic qualities become evident before her departure when she reciprocates Humbert's actions. Humbert recalls, "she was in my arms, her innocent mouth melting under the ferocious pressure of dark male jaws" (66). Humbert and Dolores's sexual endeavors seem to be complementary because of their curiosity.

Dolores continues to abandon her victim complex by being promiscuous. Humbert says, "Knowing the magic and might of her own soft mouth, she managed- during one schoolyear- to raise the bonus price of a fancy embrace to three, and even four bucks" (184). Dolores's surface-level actions are not representative of underlying issues which construct her victim complex. Though Dolores appears to be antagonistic for driving Humbert to madness with her sexuality, she is not pleasing Humbert for her own enjoyment; she is coping with abuse. After having another erotic experience following Charlotte's death, Humbert admits, "She saw the stark act merely as part of a youngster's furtive world, unknown to adults" (133). Dolores is an immature child being exploited by a disturbed man, and her own disturbance is evident to those around her. Ms. Pratt from the Beardsley School tells Humbert, "both teachers and schoolmates find Dolly antagonistic, dissatisfied, cagey- and everybody wonders why you are so firmly opposed to all the natural recreations of a normal child" (196). Clearly, it is wrong to perceive Dolores, a young, sexually inexperienced child, as a tyrant committing sexual misconduct, especially when she has fallen prey to a sexual predator.

Julian Connolly, the author of an introductory text to *Lolita*, mentions "Leslie Fiedler's astonishing critique: 'Annabel [Leigh] as nymphomaniac, demonic rapist of the soul- such is the lithe, brown Campfire Girl' and the idea that audiences may view Dolores as a stereotypical, rebellious girl despite being abused" (56). Stephen Blackwell also describes Lolita's antagonistic qualities: "Lolita turns the tables on the man who has hunted her: she becomes the huntress" by initiating her first sexual encounter with Humbert (279). In the Beardsley School production of "The Enchanted Hunters," created by Clare Quilty, Dolores is given the part of a farmer's daughter who successfully puts hunters in a trance. Quilty's inspiration for the enchantress is Dolores, and her role in the play is reminiscent of her relationship with Humbert (Blackwell 279). Connolly notes that critics who view Dolores as an antagonist "have been taken in by Humbert's pronounced anxiety about the loose morals he perceives in Dolly and the teenagers who surround her" later in the novel (56). Dolores's victimhood is questionable because her unusual receptiveness to Humbert's desires and the romanticized, unreliable narration from Humbert overshadow her trauma. However, once again, it is simply unjust to perceive a victim of abuse as a predator.

Dr. Frankenstein and Humbert Humbert's shared, destructive behavior mainly impacts the Creature and Dolores Haze, but it also affects the protagonists towards the endings of *Frankenstein* and *Lolita*. By allowing themselves to become conditioned by their vices of pride and lust, the protagonists must suffer the inevitable consequences of their actions. After losing track of the Creature, Frankenstein has a new, self-destructive mission to find his creation and end its tyranny. He says, "Never will I omit my search, until he or I perish" (147). Since the conflict of *Frankenstein* has worsened, the doctor has become a fugitive bound to the Monster's actions, a form of punishment Frankenstein must face for succumbing to his own vanity. Similarly, Humbert Humbert dedicates himself to finding his doppelganger, Clare Quilty, for stealing Lolita; earlier in the novel, Humbert steals Dolores from her ordinary life, and in like manner, his equal decides to do the same. Humbert states, "To myself I whispered that I still had my gun, and was still a free man- free to trace the fugitive" (247). Victor and Humbert's objectives display their lack of growth as characters and offer the impression that their punishments are well deserved.

Despite experiencing traumatic events, the Monster and Lolita do not find pleasure in the suffering of their captors. Though they initially express anger and resentment for being wronged, the alleged antagonists are surprisingly respectful. After seeing that Victor has passed away, the Creature shows signs of mourning and regret for leading him on a silly manhunt, admitting, "I […] irretrievably destroyed thee by destroying all thou lovedst" (158). He even wants to die following his creator's death. Dolores Haze is also respectful when she meets Humbert as Mrs. Schiller. Earlier in the novel, Humbert describes her outburst: "She said I had attempted to violate her several times when I was her mother's roomer. She said she was sure I had murdered her mother" (205). Dolores could easily dismiss Humbert and bring up the past, but she calmly declines his request to live with him again.

When antihero protagonists are rightfully confronted by characters they have wronged, it may become difficult to decide if victims of the protagonists' actions are antagonists; there may not always be a clear differentiation between the two. Dolores and Frankenstein's Monster possess traits associated with typical antagonists because they counteract the protagonists' actions. When presented with brutality, both victims act harshly and eventually have the great ability to become superior and to victimize their abusers. Victor Frankenstein and Humbert Humbert create conflict, and the Creature and Dolores Haze are victims who respond appropriately to their vices.

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Manipulating Power in *The Canterbury Tales*, "The Miller's Tale" by Geoffrey Chaucer

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The ability to seize power is not always apparent to the one who holds it. One's use of power contributes to how effectively one's desires are obtained through others. While Alisoun is the center of attention in Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Miller's Tale," she seems oblivious of her own power, and, as a result, she cannot efficiently utilize her influence. Nicholas, on the other hand, acknowledges his strengths. Through his manipulations, Nicholas orchestrates matters effectively to achieve his goals, making him the most powerful character in the story.

In "The Miller's Tale," social interactions rather than social hierarchy indicate the measurement of power. Raymond Belliotti has developed the philosophical concept of "power-over," where the interactions between the superior and subordinate establishes power (13). The superior, or influencer, strives for power, imposing his or her desires onto the subordinate, while considering the subordinate's interests and social-status limitations. However, the influencer should not blatantly implement power over the subordinate, for if the subordinate recognizes a deliberate exercise of power, the subordinate may lose trust and resist the superior. Since the superior desires power and wants to minimize the chance of failure, the superior may discover it is best to be secretive about his or her ambitions. This discreteness easily leads to deception, so that the "power-over" includes the influencer tricking the subordinate for power.

While Belliotti's concept of power demonstrates that deception is required for obtaining power, philosopher Joel Rudinow's theory of manipulation illustrates the connection between manipulation and power. Using Rudinow's theory of successful manipulation, there are three main components; if the manipulator succeeds in [1] influencing the desired behavior of the person, [2] persuading the person with favorable incentives, or [3] exploiting the weakness of the person to gain desired behavior, then the manipulation is effective (341-343). If the superior accomplishes two of the three components of successful manipulation, he or she most likely will obtain power. Rudinow's criteria indicates that manipulation, along with deception, is associated with gaining power. As Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Miller's Tale" is a story that includes frequent tricks and deception, these concepts of power and manipulation will be applied to measure the power dynamics of "The Miller's Tale."

In "The Miller's Tale," the initial deception originates from Nicholas, who wants Alisoun as a lover even though she is John's wife. He continues manipulating Alisoun despite her previous rejections. Alisoun eventually gives in to Nicholas's appeals, and he persuades her to join him in tricking John so they can spend more time together. If she helps with Nicholas's plan to deceive her husband, "She sholde slepen in his arm al nyght, / For this was his desir and hire also" (3406-07). Nicholas accomplishes two of the Rudinow components for successful manipulation: he exploits Alisoun's weakness in longing for intimacy, and he provides her a favorable incentive to get the intimacy she wants. William Woods describes Nicholas as the most capable character to capture the heart of Alisoun (176). He understands her needs and cleverly adapts her desires to his, and these skills, along with his craftiness and intelligence allow him to become a powerful manipulator. In this way, Nicholas effortlessly obtains power over others and thereby changes his power status in the tale.

Although Nicholas manipulates Alisoun, she initially achieves power over him with her appearance. Her beauty is what drives Nicholas to manipulate everyone, including Alisoun. Furthermore, he is not the only one enthralled by her looks. Absolon, who is also infatuated with her, states, "To looke on hire hym thoughte a myrie lyf, / She was so propre and sweete and likerous" (3344-45). In both cases, Alisoun gains power over the men by exploiting their weakness, which is the desire for sex. However, although she does not actively use her beauty, she nevertheless successfully manipulates the men. These indirect manipulations are effective, making the men commit deceitful actions while motivated by their lustful desires. Finally, while her power stems from her beauty, she is restricted by her marriage, preventing her from ascending the power hierarchy.

The older husband of a young wife, John is happy marrying Alisoun, but his insecurity and jealousy restrict her potential for power, as he has confined her to their household. John does not trust Alisoun around other men since he believes "she was wylde and yong, and he was old / And demed hymself been lik a cokewold" (3225-26). In Gila Aloni's exploration of intimacy in "The Miller's Tale," Alisoun is trapped by John's idea of intimacy, ensuring her closeness and loyalty by keeping her inside the household at all possible times (167). In this way, Alisoun is treated more like a figure of intimacy than a human being in her marriage. Nicholas and Absolon know she is married, yet they still pursue her, mainly in hopes for sex. Though Alisoun's beauty is advantageous, her objectification creates a limitation for how much power she can gain, and because of her living situation, her power if further restricted. Despite the large age gap between John and Alisoun, they are a married couple, and this is the main source of John's power, through which he tries to control her freedom, treating her as his "private possession" (Aloni 167). From John's perspective, his wife's beauty means he needs to hide her from any threat that will take her away from him. However, his power over Alisoun disappears when he is not within her proximity. Nicholas sleeps with Alisoun. Absolon, too, senses an advantage: "Now is tyme to wake al nyght, / For sikirly I saugh hym nat stirynge / Aboute his dore, syn day bigan to sprynge" (3672-74). When John is temporarily gone, the rest of the characters take action, and based on the characters' interactions and outcomes obtained by each, Nicholas and Alisoun benefit the most due to their manipulations, becoming the ones with the most power in the tale.

The power dynamics of Alisoun and Nicholas are more substantial and complex, whereas Absolon and John deceive other characters less frequently than the other two. Although Absolon tries to manipulate Alisoun, he fails to do so. All attempts by Absolon to capture her are unsuccessful, as Alisoun "loveth" (3386) Nicholas, making Absolon "hire ape, / And al his ernest turneth til a jape" (3389-90). Any power Absolon might have over her dissipates when Nicholas is with Alisoun, and John's power over her, which is otherwise strong, diminishes when he is not present.

Nicholas, on the other hand, not only gains power from his interactions with Alisoun but from those with her husband, as well. Simmons Walts notes that the relationship dynamic between Nicholas and John is primarily based on economic circumstance (401). Nevertheless, because Nicholas lives in John's house, Nicolas is able to fake illness, tricking John into worrying about his well-being and eventually telling John a fabricated tale of impending apocalypse. Nicholas does not utilize any actual knowledge of astrology for his deception but rather mainly manipulates John's understanding of the Bible (Walts 403). The lack of any academic information to formulate his grand scheme demonstrates that Nicholas is cunning enough to take advantage of his economic circumstances and his personal relationship with John in order to fool him.

Alisoun may be the most powerful character in the tale because her beauty and her influence on the men instigates the whole storyline. Nevertheless, Alisoun's position of power does not fit Belliotti's concept of "power-over," which requires that the influencer is aware of his or her manipulations (13). During Nicholas's first interactions with Alisoun, and John's creation of makeshift bathtubs, she seems oblivious to the risks the men will take for her because of her beauty. Because her manipulations are mostly indirect, Alisoun seems unaware of her influence; therefore, in Belliotti's terms, Alisoun is vulnerable to Nicholas's manipulations, willingly and enthusiastically performing actions that her superior desires (14). What makes Alisoun vulnerable is the exposure of her weakness, physically being with someone she enjoys and "loveth" (3386). Nicolas' exploitation of this vulnerability becomes apparent when she supports Nicholas attempts to deceive John. Scholars may argue she is aware of her manipulations since she consciously agrees with Nicholas's plan to sleep with her, indicating that she knows her beauty is influential to others. However, she does not begin using her beauty's power until Nicholas actively pursues her. Moreover, though she does have a goal in the tale, sleeping with Nicholas, that she can achieve through manipulation, the foundations of her goal fundamentally stem from Nicholas's goal of fulfilling his own lust.

As most characters attempt to deceive others for their own desires, they all face the consequences of these actions. Parry, however, observes that all male characters receive justice for their deceptions, while Alisoun gets away with hers (139). Parry takes account of each character's physical state at the end of "The Miller's Tale." Alisoun deceives Absolon by tricking him into kissing her bottom. Absolon, in return, prepares a "hoote kultour" (3776) in his attempt to pay back Alisoun. However, he ends up burning Nicholas instead after Nicholas himself fails to trick Absolon successfully. John breaks his arm. All the men are humiliated, but, as Parry notes, Alisoun does not receive any physical punishment. However, one can argue that her beauty bears an ingrained punishment for her.

Her beauty is capable of substantial power. Through her beauty, she manipulates everyone but seems unaware of the severity of its effects. Her beauty alone potentially acts as her punishment, as she will have to face the aftermath of the power her beauty caused. Alisoun becomes "the figure whose response and responsibility to those who desire and would possess her stands as the ultimate, elusive interpretive treasure after which all of Chaucer's readers within and without the tale seek" (Parry 137). As a result, she may have to pay the price for the consequences of actions instigated by her beauty.

Also, Alisoun is able to acquire power because she is valued by others, and, because Nicholas and Alisoun are young and relatively close in age, their desires are more likely to intertwine, allowing them to become powerful together. However, even though Alisoun is powerful, her lack of awareness and vulnerability establishes her as less powerful than Nicholas. With his intelligence, he, as the superior, gains control of each situation (at least until the end of the tale). Through deception, he influences behaviors and exploits weaknesses, prevailing as the most powerful character in "The Miller's Tale."

From the power dynamics shaped by manipulations in "The Miller's Tale," readers are left to consider the concept of power, how it is created, and how it should be exercised toward others. With his power of manipulation, Nicholas, being fully aware of his actions, becomes the mastermind of "The Miller's Tale," essentially controlling the actions of the other characters until he himself eventually falls victim to his own manipulations.

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Huckleberry Finn's Journey Toward Morality

GABBY SOTELO

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain explores questions of moral behavior. The character of Huckleberry Finn, specifically, acts in ways that are reckless and amoral. In fact, Huck Finn frequently is characterized as a trickster; he seems to be unconcerned about the morality of his actions, often deceiving people only for the sake of his own entertainment. However, throughout the story, Huck shows remarkable character development. Using the philosophy of Humanism, which includes the belief that human beings are flawed but capable of improvement, the reader sees that Finn is not amoral, but moral.[1] He encompasses humanistic values like critical thinking and ethics, a system of moral values that helps differentiate right and wrong. Although some argue that Huckleberry Finn is a trickster, his strong sense of ethics and his conscious, active pursuit of knowledge demonstrate that he is trying to grow as a moral being.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn presents Humanism as a way of life through Huck's moral awakening. Britt Holbrook defines Humanism as a philosophy "based on empathy, reason, and experience…[R]eason is a product of human intelligence that, when combined with experience, leads to the scientific method [of Humanism]" (495). The philosophy of Humanism relies on individual experience. Throughout the novel Huck experiences extraordinary crises for a white person, especially a child. A central proposition of Humanism, as per Corliss Lamont, states, "[Humanism] believes that man is an evolutionary product of the Nature of which he is part" (13). A person changes with life experiences; these experiences may range from good to bad, but each has a specific effect that can cause a variety of responses, ultimately changing the individual. Therefore, according to Humanism, every person can change and evolve. Huckleberry Finn is unwillingly confronted with the severe pressure of a racist mentality in which he has been raised, and his resistance revolutionizes his set of morals. Although Huck is a child, his understanding is substantial, made up of conflicting perceptions, which can lead the reader to the misconception that he is passive. Janet Gabler-Hover states, "[Huck] is, despite his sympathetic nature, a character whose moral vision, though profound, is seriously and consistently flawed" (69). However, Humanism states that each human being is "flawed." Nobody is perfect, especially an uneducated child. Huck tries to grow morally throughout the novel, and this growing morality is fed by his diverse interactions with other characters, most importantly with Jim. Huck and Jim encounter each other when both are running away. They travel the Mississippi River

[1] Corliss Lamont in The *Philosophy of Humanism* states that *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is a precedent for Humanism and is, therefore, a key to the Humanist Movement.

in search of freedom, but in the long run they foster a father-and-son relationship, which leads to Huck's moral transformation.

Despite how Huck changes throughout the novel, many critics label him as a trickster. (See, for example, Bercovitch 9ff.) According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a *trickster* is "One who practises trickery; a rogue, cheat, knave," but in literature tricksters often are neither moral nor immoral but rather amoral. Notorious tricksters, such as the Miller in Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* and Puck in William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, amuse themselves by mocking others in order to cause distress to the people around them. Both the Miller and Puck disregard the consequences of their silly and rash behavior for instant gratification. Also, tricksters reject change when it is focused on themselves, a distinguishable weakness that can help detect one. Tricksters essentially either lie or scheme in order to entertain themselves or to cause chaos. However, Huck has no family support, so he has adapted trickster behavior during his young life in order to survive. Mark Altschuler explains why Huck is labeled a trickster: "Lying and scheming are Huck's 'Cultural Scraps,' behavior he has learned from people such as the King and the Duke and Tom Sawyer. Tom lies and schemes to glorify himself, while the King and the Duke lie and scheme to exploit others" (36).

Although Huck Finn plays tricks on other characters, his most pivotal tricks are meant for Jim. The pranks Huck plays on Jim are heinous, but in a perverse way the reader feels sympathy for Huck. When Jim and Huck are engulfed in a thick fog and become lost, Huck thoughtlessly decides to have fun by tricking a vulnerable Jim. Jim responds by saying he was devastated by Huck's disappearance and that he feels like a fool for caring about him. In fact, anyone who would do that to a friend is "trash." This response strongly affects Huck: "It made me feel so mean I could almost kissed his foot to get him to take it back" (98). Huck feels so guilty that he humbles himself to Jim. More importantly, he feels no regret about apologizing to a black man and vows to refrain from hurting him again. In contrast, tricksters, by nature, are unapologetic because they get a thrill from causing chaos and disrupting others' tranquility. Therefore, Huck does not fit the label of being a trickster because, although he has no regrets for apologizing to a black man, his conscience troubles him.

Huckleberry Finn develops a strong sense of ethics through his insensitive actions. Huck's immediate inability to distinguish between what is wrong or right allows his subconscious to control his actions. However, Huck's experiences push him toward ethical maturation. Lamont states, "Humanism believes in an ethics or morality that grounds all human values…that holds as its highest goal the this-worldly happiness, freedom, and progress—economic, cultural, and ethical— of all mankind, irrespective of nation, race, or religion" (13). The utmost values Huck Finn demonstrates are loyalty, compassion and freedom. Finn's loyalty to Jim despite his conflicted conscience is crucial to their relationship. Huck is adamant about making sure Jim does not return to slavery. Throughout chapter 35, Huck shows a discernible transformation, with his confession that he would not mind going back and helping Jim escape again (234) and his careful planning of Jim's escape with Tom Sawyer.

Another instance where Huck demonstrates the development of a personal ethical code involves what critics call an example of "situational ethics"[2]; when two men come searching for runaway slaves and ask Huck if the man in the boat accompanying him is black or white, Huck answers that Jim is "white" (93). Although Huck feels guilty while contemplating what to say, his decision is very morally mature even though it constitutes as internalized racism. Huck's ethical values consequently lead to their fight for freedom.

Ultimately, we see Huck being ruled by the ethical value of compassion. An ethical ambition of Humanism is compassionate concern for all people. Craig Taylor emphasizes, "We might say Huck has a certain sentiment, compassion say, and that explains why he cannot turn Jim in… Huck, we are inclined to think, is a person who manages to act with decency and compassion, despite the demands of a conscience distorted by racism" (61-62). What essentially helps Huck's bond with Jim is Huck's awareness of Jim's love for his own family, in contrast to the behavior of Huck's father, Pap, a deadbeat drunk. Huck is torn when he sees how much Jim misses his family: "He was thinking about his wife and his children, away up yonder, and he was low and homesick; because he had not ever been away from home before in his life; and I do believe he cared just as much for his people as white folks does for their'n" (167). Huck's willingness to defy social norms in order to protect his loved ones is substantial progress since he cannot simply forget his upbringing, including the pervasive racism in his society. The tremendous shift in his views is unanticipated by both Huck and to the reader.

Huckleberry Finn's active pursuit of knowledge involves much self-reflection and critical thinking. An example of Huck's internal battles is when he cannot figure out if it is morally right or wrong to help Jim escape. In chapter 35, while Huck and Tom contemplate how to help Jim escape from prison, Huck states, "Alright, then, I'll go to hell" (217). Gabler-Hover takes exception with Leo Marx, who notes, "This is the climactic moment in the ripening of [Huck's] self-knowledge." Instead, Gabler-Hover believes that this is a moment of moral awareness not for Huck, but for the audience (70). However, it is a wakeup call for both Huck and the audience: each internal battle that Huck experiences (his realization that what society says he ought to do, as per his conscience, does not feel right) similarly instructs the reader in Jim's fundamental humanity and the unfairness of his treatment.

Jim visualizes his freedom through his words, causing Huck to gravitate

[2] Unlike absolute moral standards, situational ethics requires contextualizing before judging; that is, each situation calls for a different set of moral standards.

towards him: “He was saying how the first thing he would do when he got to a free state he would he would go to saving money and never spend a single cent, and when he got enough he would buy his wife… and then they would both work to buy the two children, and if their master wouldn’t sell them, they’d get an Ab’litionist to go and steal them” (100-101). Jim’s commitment to reuniting his family despite any hardship inspires Huck to recognize Jim as a human being. Taylor agrees that the self-destructive judgments with which Huck identifies himself are not true, but “Huck’s incapacity is not a merely a psychological one, but his incapacity is a moral one” (61). Huck’s inability to turn Jim in or ditch him becomes a moral choice because of the bond they form. Huck’s subconscious recognizes the attachment before Huck’s mind can process it. In this way, Huckleberry is a dynamic character because he acquires humanist aspects due to his active pursuit of knowledge.

Although many argue that Huckleberry Finn is a trickster, his strong sense of ethics and his conscious, active pursuit of knowledge demonstrate that he tries to grow as a moral being. Altschuler claims, “Huck Finn… who has neither well developed cognitive skills nor solid perceptions of social reality, does in fact develop morally” (31). The reader cannot blame Huck for being socially inept due to his very limited and non-consistent influences. Huck, despite being so young and uncivilized, overcomes these challenges, including societal pressure and pressure on himself, which help him build the groundwork of a sharpened morality, therefore demonstrating that Huck tries to grow as a moral being. Huck’s character is unique because such change at a young age, particularly with limited positive social influences, is gratifying and memorable. As a result, Huck is not the only one who grows; the reader does as well. Humanism is an ethical theory because its basic principle is to encourage helping others. Huck applies his newfound sense of morals and ethical guidelines to help Jim, becoming a humanist, and in this way, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* serves as a moral guide to those who read it.

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The Deferral of Desire in Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale"

IZAKI METROPOULOS

Jacques Lacan's Concept of Desire and the Discourse of the Other

When approaching the Wife of Bath, I began with a simple Lacanian question: "Is desire located in the body or in human relationships?" (Kirchner 83). Early psychoanalytic thought begins with the works of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), who sees the subject as primarily influenced by a series of biological drives (Eros, Thanatos, etc.) (Felluga, *Critical* 93). Perhaps it is true that, as pleasure-seeking creatures, humans generally seek dopamine-boosting experiences—indicating a causal relationship between biology and behavior. However, many of Freud's successors, such as Jacques Lacan (1901-1981), assert that there is much more to human behavior than material causes. According to Lacan, human desire is inevitably tangled in and influenced by the Symbolic Order,[1] a technical term referring to the intricate web of social customs and rules (Felluga, *Critical* 307). To complement Freud's "organic model," Lacan presents a "linguistic model," which explores "the ideological structures that, especially through language, make the human subject… understand his or her relationship to himself and to others" (Felluga, "Modules…Psychosexual"). In other words, for Lacan, it is necessary to witness the interplay of somatic, intrapersonal, and interpersonal experiences when analyzing human behavior, particularly the origin of desire.

To preface, it is useful to examine a fundamental psychoanalytic presupposition about human nature: "no matter how full of conscious intent they may be, people do not always know exactly what it is that they are up to" (Ingham 463). Like Freud, Lacan emphasizes unconscious causes of behavior that elude subjective experience. One of such causes is an "underlying fantasy structure" that attaches expectations to objects of desire; however, Lewis A. Kirshner notes, "Because this promise is not attached to any clearly realizable or realistic goal, desire…cannot be fully satisfied," and thus it reproduces itself (84-5). To illustrate this concept, it is practical to examine the common goal of attaining "wealth." It is perhaps a truism to state that pursuing material wealth does not lead to lasting satisfaction. This lack of satisfaction is partly because "material wealth" is an ill-defined goal—it is both relative and even subjective-- and the underlying *promise* of complete satisfaction lies

[1] The symbolic order is defined as, "the social world of linguistic communication, intersubjective relations, knowledge of ideological conventions, and the acceptance of the law" (Felluga, *Critical* 307). Lacan's concept of the "Symbolic Order" is often compared to Freud's idea of the "Super Ego."

in something other than the acquisition of goods: e.g., emotional comfort, social status, etc. However, the metaphysical promises underlying this fantasy are difficult to accurately identify. Ultimately, as Kirshner writes, "[b]ecause achievement of this aim [total satisfaction] is impossible, we substitute fantasies of sexual, romantic, narcissistic, or material accomplishment that stitch desire to the fabric of social reality" (87). Likewise, when Lacan maintains that "the unconscious is the discourse of the Other," he means that the ubiquitous influence of culture *defines* human desire (Felluga, "Modules…Desire"), and, by extension, the articulation of fantasies often conform to societal conventions and expectations.[2]

Acknowledging the complex and often contradictory nature of human desire yields to non-conventional analytical approaches to literature; after all, psychoanalytic criticism follows the principal that—due to unconscious factors— not every utterance should be taken at face value (Ingham 463). For example, in Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, what establishes the Wife of Bath as a complex character are the multiple inconsistencies in her narrative, moral prescriptions, and desires. Demonstrated by her experience with marriage, is it plausible that Alison truly desires dominance over her spouses? Or perhaps, as Susan Crane asserts, her indefinite pursuit of marital satisfaction points to a quality of being "inarticulate, even about the meaning of sovereignty she imagines" (24-5). Regardless, the Wife's endless quest invites an exploration of the interplay between deferred desire, fantasy, and contemporary social rules. The illusory and inexhaustible nature of the Wife's desires are fueled by a fantasy of achieving *sovereynetee*, which both serves as a promise of complete fulfillment yet paradoxically perpetuates the lack of it. More specifically, the Wife continually attempts to invert the gendered role of power in her marriages, yet never finds satisfaction in doing so.[3]

Historicists and Taboo

Before sitting the Wife of Bath on the analyst's couch, it is important to address the skepticism towards psychoanalytic theory—especially in the realm of literary studies. As Slavoj Žižek puts it, "One of the seasonal rituals of our intellectual life is that every couple of years, psychoanalysis is pronounced *démodé*, surpassed, finally dead and buried" (7). A common refutation, as previously demonstrated by historicist critics such as Stephen Greenblatt, Frederick Crews, and Lee Patterson (Marshall 1207), claims that psychoanalysis' lack of biological falsifiability disqualifies the theory as a hermeneutic. Patterson argues that as the Freudian system suffers "a collapse of credibility in the real world," its theoretical principles—by extension— lose any claim to universality and use in medieval literary studies (67).

[2] The "Other" ("the big Other") is often interchangeable with the "Symbolic Order" (see page one). Italics mine.

[3] John A. Pitcher argues that, "Alison's desire…is to *be* the other" (42). This is not exactly a claim that Alison desires to *be* male; however, she—at least claims— to desire male power and privilege by achieving mastery in her relationships.

However, his critique judges psychoanalysis only on its ability to make scientific causal claims, which is, simply, not what the theory has evolved into. Admittedly, Freud's system is a mixture of "qualitative hermeneutics with quantitative theories" (Axmacher 1); but, as Cynthia Marshall writes, "the theory… is something organic and renewable—an evolving body of ideas that provides techniques for reading" (1207). For example, Lacan deviates from Freud to focus on linguistically-based social constructions, Julia Kristeva necessarily reinterprets psychoanalytic thought through a feminist lens, and Slavoj Zizek uses Lacanian and Hegelian philosophy to analyze politics and culture (Felluga, "General").

However, as Patterson emphatically declares in his lengthy polemic, "the news of the demise of psychoanalysis as a reliable mode of inquiry seems to not have reached the small circle of academic literary and cultural criticism," and he further claims that the hydra of "orthodox Freudianism" is still "a largely unquestioned source of authority" (70). Yet, Patterson disregards modern developments in the field on the grounds that many, such as Lacan, use Freud as a foundation of psychological discourse: if the Freudian foundation is flawed, Freud's successors, by extension, are also (72). "As for Žižek," Patterson argues, "his neo-Lacanian psychoanalysis of culture has a political and sociological interest that is lacking in Lacan himself" (72). On the contrary— this argument demonstrates the present state of psychoanalysis not as a dogmatic system of beliefs but a living system of metaphysical observations that have supplemented studies of popular culture, as well as relevant critical theories such as feminism and Marxism. Regardless, the domain of literary criticism is often polarizing. John A. Sebastian recounts, "Both historicists and psychoanalytic critics have upon occasion undertaken to situate themselves not only *in* one of the two theoretical camps but also specifically *in opposition* to each other" (771). Although Patterson warns of the use of psychoanalysis as an interpretive method, viewing it as an anachronistic approach, this is merely a partisan stance; rather, an eclectic approach to criticism can incorporate various elements of psychoanalytic thought. This method of criticism, which Sebastian describes as "a democratizing of approaches," is becoming increasingly mainstream in literary studies (774). Therefore, this essay will combine elements of Lacanian thought with historical accounts of contemporary sexuality in order to provide an adequately contextualized yet alternative perspective.

"Sovereynetee" as the Object of Desire

In "The Wife of Bath's Tale," Alison provides a clear articulation of what she considers the essential female desire to be: "Wommen desyren to have sovereynetee" (1038). However, how is "sovereynetee" defined in the context of the tale? As Susanne Sara Thomas notes, "it is given a limited definition by being paired with the word 'maistrie'" (89). The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists *sovereynetee* as, "supremacy in respect of power, domination, or rank; supreme dominion, authority, or rule."[4] Furthermore, *maistrie* borrows from the Old French word *maistrier*: "to rule" or "overcome" (*OED*). Thomas acknowledges these definitions, but she also relies on a few contextual definitions in order to properly define *sovereynetee*. Because the Wife views "gentility, poverty, and beauty" as subjective qualities and therefore self-definable, Thomas extrapolates that *sovereynetee* is "the ability to define, and thus control, one's own desires" (89). This distinction is further exemplified in "The Wife of Bath's Tale." To Thomas, it is implausible for the knight to suddenly relinquish his marital right to sexual ownership at the end of the tale (87). She argues, then, that the knight's desire is never his own, and he is only fully satisfied when allowing the *wyf* to define his desires for him. Therefore, the knight does not properly display *sovereynetee*, whereas the *wyf* does. Only through the transference of marital power from the husband to the wife do, "they lyve unto hir lyves ende / In parfit joye," or lasting happiness (1257-8).

To further expand on the ideas of Susanne Sara Thomas, it is certainly arguable that the Wife's Tale establishes that attaining *sovereynetee* does not only constitute the "ability to…control one's own desires" but equally the ability to control the desires of another. The Wife's tale does not mirror a reciprocal relationship but one in which the woman is in the position of dominance. John A. Pitcher proposes that "understood as a type of wish fulfillment, the mechanical conversion of… the Knight from violence to obedience may simply reflect Alison's fantasy of mastery over aggressive men" (41). Demonstrated by the Wife's experience, it is evident that her fable reflects her desire for dominance and autonomy. For example, in the Wife of Bath's prologue, she is rather explicit about her ability to choose partners based on sexual virility and wealth: "Yblessed be God that I have wedded five / Of which I have *pyked* out the beste, / Bothe of here nether purs and of here cheste," (44-44b).[5] She later declares, "Why hydestow, with sorwe, / The keyes of thy cheste away fro me? / It is my good as wel as thyn, pardee," which indicates an entitlement to her husband's wealth (308-10). This, of course, is a one-sided relationship. She warns, "thou shalt nat bothe…be maister of my body and of my good" (313-14). Here, it is important to address the specific combinations of the words "purs" and "cheste," and likewise, "body" and "good." By combining sexual language with monetary language, the Wife evokes the prevalent link between material acquisition and sexual ownership. A parallel can be drawn to the Wife's tale: shortly before achieving *sovereynetee*, the *wyf* suggests: "syn I knowe youre delit, / I shal fulfille youre worldly appetit" (1217-18), implying a connection between *sovereynetee* and sexual ownership. However, "The Wife of Bath's Tale" is not a purely sexual fantasy of dominance; rather, Alison's fantasy is also *political*, as it is expressed through a

[4] *The Oxford English Dictionary*, "sovereignty" 2. The *OED* also notes that in 1374, Chaucer similarly used the word "sovereynetee" in *Troilus & Criseyde*: "Ye shul no more have sovereynte / Of my love, than right in this cas is." In its use in *Troilus*, "sovereynte" denotes mastery or authority, not simply independence, which may point to the Wife of Bath's underlying fantasy of domination.

[5] Italics mine.

negotiation of contemporary marital hierarchical structures.[6] In Chaucer's age, the issues of marital power, sexual ownership, and material acquisition were often intertwined.

The Wife of Bath in Context: Sexual Politics in Chaucer's Age

The theme of sex is prevalent in "The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale." Through her self-descriptions, Alison not only uses sexual language but often equates her sexuality with male virility. For example, she yearns to be "refresshed[7] half so ofte as" King Solomon (35-38), a biblical figure who had seven-hundred wives and three-hundred concubines. Moreover, when referring to her husband's duty to pay his sexual "dette" in marriage (l. 130), she proclaims, "Now wherwith sholde he make his paiement, / If he ne used his sely instrument" (131-32). Here, she represents the phallus in material terms, as an instrument or tool to be used. Soon after, Alison uses the equivalent term to describe her sexuality: "in wyfhod I will use my instrument / As frely as my Makere hath it sent" (149-50). Furthermore, the Wife's "use" of her "instrument" is also peculiar because it implies motion, will, and force, traits that are antithetical to contemporary views of female sexuality. Alcuin Blamires observes that "a keystone of medieval thinking" was based on the premise that "male sexuality is essentially 'active' and female sexuality is essentially 'passive'" (211). In other words, what distinguishes masculine and feminine sexuality is the language of motion; therefore, by desiring to be the "user" or "initiator" of sexual contact, the Wife of Bath seeks to invert contemporary sexual norms.

Shortly after, she employs the language of marital debt to describe her ideal sexual relations with her husband: "Myn housbonde shal it have bothe eve and morwe, / Whan that hym list come forth and paye his dette" (152-53). The Wife's use of the word "dette" should not be overlooked, as in Chaucer's age, it is nearly impossible to separate sexual agency from uxorial debts. Blamires writes, "Ownership of sexuality—especially female sexuality—was a matter for intense regulation in the Middle Ages" (216). Chaucer was especially preoccupied with the topic of sexual ownership and was well aware of how "it generally reduces wives to the resignation of their bodies in the marital bed" (Blamires 217), so it comes to no surprise that this political and religious matter is echoed in *The Canterbury Tales*.

Matters of sexual ownership were largely influenced by a few primary sources. First, Blamires recalls Paul's 1 Corinthians 7:4-5, in which the apostle states, "The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise, also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife" (216). The doctrinal obligation of reciprocal marriage sexuality is mirrored in the Wife of Bath's prologue:

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[6] Italics mine.

[7] The *OED* defines "refresshed" (1. b.) as, "To make oneself fresher; to restore one's strength or energy, esp. by resting, walking, having food or drink, etc." A common interpretation of this line is that the Wife desires to be refreshed sexually (Kolve and Olson 103).

"A housebonde I wol have… Which shal be bothe my dettour and my thral" (154-55). However, what adds to the controversy surrounding Alison is exactly *how* she employs the language of debt to establish herself as a powerful figure. When Alison recalls, "The thre were goode men, and riche, and olde; / Unnethe myghte they the *statut* holde / In which that they were bounden unto me" (197-99)— pointing to their inability to satisfy marital obligations[8]. Moreover, what points to the inversion of marital power is the fact that, in the Late Middle Ages, two other widespread sources ultimately place the husband in the position of "dettour" and the wife in the position of "thral," which is precisely why Alison, placed in her historical context, is controversial.

The two other sources that dictate marital relations are Lorens of Orléans' widely-read source on morality, *The Book of Vices and Virtues* and the underlying cultural views of 'active' and 'passive' sexual roles (Blamires 216). In religious life, there were two exceptions in which marital sex was not considered immoral: first, when it is performed with the intent to procreate, and second, "when one yields to the other his debt when it is asked" (Blamires 216). These two sources of gendered expectations become problematic because they reinforce aspects of male authority in relationships. As the husband is culturally expected to be the sexual initiator, the wife, in the passive role, is expected to fulfill her marital debt. However, nearly every time the Wife mentions matters of debt, she articulates a fantasy that authorizes her as the debtor. In the Wife's Tale, the *wyf* seduces the knight by remarking, "syn I knowe youre delit, / I shal fulfille youre worldly appetit" (1217-18)— this establishes that the *wyf* both knows and dictates what the knight truly desires (Thomas 90). When the knight gives up his illusions of "sovereynetee," the *wyf* assumes the role of debtor and becomes the "active" sexual partner.

Yet, if the knight's desires are never his own, does this have implications for the Wife's view of desire itself? Another equally perplexing question addresses the fact that the knight is the only character that experiences complete satisfaction: "his herte bathed in a bath of blisse" (1253). If the Wife's Tale—as Pitcher suggests—reflects Alison's wish of complete satisfaction, does she truly desire to be in the position of the knight or the *wyf*?

Complications of Desire and the Demands of the Other

Despite the clear and persuasive articulation of what Alison desires, her marital history provides evidence to suggest that the Wife's object of desire,

[8] Italics mine. According to the *OED*, Chaucer uses "statut" as, "An authoritative rule or direction" (1. c.), "That which is considered to be ordained or decreed by God, a god, or fate" (1. d.), and "An enactment, containing one or more legislative provisions, made by the legislature of a country or state and expressed in a formal document" (2. a.). In this case, the Wife of Bath not only evokes the image of debt, but is speaking from an *authoritative* standpoint, possibly also implying divine justification.

sovereynetee, is only appealing if it remains out of grasp. Speaking generally about the desire of women, she proclaims,

> We wommen han, if that I shal nat lye,
> In this matere a queynte fantasye:
> Wayte what thyng we may nat lightly have,
> Therafter wol we crie al day and crave.
> Forbede us thyng, and that desiren we. (515-19)

Regardless of establishing her fantasy of dominance as the object of desire, she paradoxically denies herself the satisfaction of attaining that object. The *lack* of satisfaction drives the pursuit of the object and renders the quest indefinite. Here, one may employ Slavoj Žižek's conceptualization of desire: "desire's *raison d'etre*… is not to realize its goal, to find full satisfaction, but to reproduce itself as desire" (150).

Furthermore, after assuming the position of dominance in her relationships, Alison abandons it. She excuses her husband's infidelity only after he relinquishes his "right" to sexual ownership:
Namely abedde hadden they meschaunce:

> Ther wolde I chide and do hem no plesaunce;
> I wolde no lenger in the bed abyde…
> Til he had maad his raunson unto me;
> Thanne wolde I suffre hym do his nycetee. (407-12)

Also, as Pitcher writes, "the desire for mastery seems to last only so long as it remains unsatisfied, for Alison abandons the position of mastery the instant Jankyn yields it to her" (41). "Is mastery then," Pitcher asks, "simply a means to an end, an instrument for realizing a more basic feminine desire for reciprocity or mutual submission?" (41). It is difficult to answer this question, as Alison evokes images of marital reciprocity, then overshadows these with endorsements of uxorial dominance– all while paradoxically demonstrating a history of submissiveness after attaining her goal of sovereignty. These contradictions point to an inability to properly identify and articulate what Alison desires, and therefore, they engender an endless pursuit of a hidden and unidentifiable object.

Likewise, why does the Wife continue to seek satisfaction in unsatisfactory marriage agreements? When speaking of Jankyn, the Wife proclaims, "I trowe I loved hym best, for that he / Was of his love daungerous to me" (ll. 513-14). It is often evident that human fantasies motivate subjects beyond what is pleasurable. Ingham writes, "subjects tend to seek out not only (or even mainly) satisfaction and fulfillment, but the dissatisfactions of limitation, frustration, painful repetition" (471). When pursuing a goal, for instance, desire does not simply motivate a subject beyond the pleasure principle. Rather, to understand the mechanisms of desire, one must also understand the perverse elements of satisfaction in the denial of pleasure. What motivates human behavior transcends the notion of what is nominally pleasurable or self-evidently "good" for an individual. Therefore, the Lacanian hermeneutic is useful in understanding irrationality, as exploring one's habits of dissatisfaction and self-abasement lend to questions about the authentic motivations underlying fantasy structures. Often, and ultimately, when the object of desire is attained, the subject realizes both the irrationality of the pursuit and another key revelation: they never truly desired it in the first place.

For Lacan, desire is inevitably intertwined with the demands of the Other and is frequently driven by ideological forces that artificially create fantasy (Felluga, *Critical* 72). In the Wife's tale, the knight's bliss is only possible through submission, specifically to the *wyf*'s promises of satisfaction. Complete and total satisfaction, *jouissance*, is only achieved by acknowledging that his desires are the result of artificial implantation. If *sovereynetee*, as Thomas describes, truly is "the ability to define, and thus control, one's own desires" (89), the knight *and* the Wife lack the means to properly articulate and control their desires. Perhaps then, to echo the Lacanian maxim, the Wife implicitly admits that, "our desire is never properly our own" (Felluga, "Modules…Desire"). But also, "The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale" reflects the view that sexuality is simply impossible to separate from the demands of the Other—this is precisely why her search for dominance relies on achievement through existing marital structures. On Lacan, Dino Felluga writes: "Desire…has little to do with material sexuality for Lacan; it is caught up in social structures and strictures, in the fantasy version of reality that forever dominated our lives after our entrance into language" *(Critical* 72). Applying this framework, it is certainly understandable that Alison repeatedly negotiates her sexual agency through appropriations of biblical allegory.

To conclude, the Wife of Bath, as anomalous as she is, elucidates a common trait of the human psyche: its unpredictability. Alison as a character exists in a social network of demands, and her puzzling quest for sovereignty reflects the subject's endless struggle for satisfaction against the demands of the Other. Ultimately, one of the goals of psychoanalytic criticism is to explore the common contradictions in narrative structures and accept cognitive and behavioral incongruency as an axiom of human character. As Lee Patterson notes, "literature…is, or has been, a primary means by which literate persons negotiate their experience. One of the reasons we read literature is because it shows us different ways of being human in the world" (94). As the reader, one engages in a dialogue with characters, and thus, these characters serve as a vital window into subjective experience.

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