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POLYPHONY

THE UNDERGRADUATE ENGLISH LITERATURE, AMERICAN STUDIES, AND CREATIVE WRITING JOURNAL

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EDITORIAL

With the academic year coming to a close, we are once again celebrating the incredible work done by EAC Students within the University. This is the last official issue that this year's team will work on and I believe this issue of Polyphony, featuring a perfect blend of Creative Writing, American Studies and English Literature essays, is once again a culmination of all we stand for as a publication.

This issue features fourteen pieces in total. There are two incredible poems. One titled 'Second Genesis' that is written by our very own Senior Editor, Gabrielle Labonne, and the second poem titled 'Sunday Night, Monday Morning' written by Jay Pugh. This issue features a wide array of English Literature essays, spanning from Seriana Maria Manuela Eisele's translation and Commentary of *Wulf and Eadwacer* & *Deor* to Meah Worsencroft's essay on Childhood, Perspective and Perception in Katherine Mansfield's short stories and Carys Richards' exploration of 'Monstrous Androgyny and the Desirability of Bodies in Ridley Scott's *Alien*'.

This issue also includes two incredible American Studies Essays that explore both film, text and American history titled 'Escaping America: The Navigation of the American Landscape in *Thelma and Louise* & *Queen and Slim*' and 'The Conflict of African American Religious Identity in Langston Hughes' *The Big Sea* written by Ella Porter and Jay Mitra, respectively.

Tied together and the cover donned with the incredible art piece painted by Matylda Klos, I, along with the entire team are proud to present Polyphony's sixth issue and we hope you enjoy it as much as we enjoyed working on it.

Ash Sodawala
Editor in Chief

The Shift from Romanticism to Victorianism: Literary and Periodic Rupture in the Poetry of Alfred, Lord Tennyson and Felicia Hemans

LUKE BRYAN, English Literature

The transition between the Romantic and Victorian periods caused a significant literary division. Michael Timko's reading of how 'the central cultural symbol of the Victorian period is not the soaring of the Romantic', but instead 'one of engagement, in both the sense of battle and quest,' defines the transition to the Victorian period as a move away from aspiration, and towards rupture.[1] Alfred, Lord Tennyson's elegiac poem, *In Memorium*, and Felicia Hemans' poems, 'Casabianca' and 'Indian Woman's Death Song,'all reflect the anxiety that commitment to either period is impossible, placing each poem on a Romantic-Victorian continuum. These ruptures do not merely relate to the poems' periodisation but act as a framework to delineate the exclusion of convention prominent within their content, structure, and form. These elements portray rupture as calamitously shifting societal expectations through focusing on grief and mourning, leading to a shared conception by Tennyson and Hemans of an unravelling literary realm.

Rupture is immediately evident within Tennyson's and Hemans' usage of form, which disrupts the coherence of their poetic voice. John Reed, in noting some characteristics of the Romantic and Victorian periods, highlights 'the Romantic urge toward expansion of self and the Victorian tendency toward control and consolidation,' which is visible within all three poems through the framing devices' imposition on the texts themselves.[2] Tennyson's *In Memoriam* spans 131 sections, but this is framed by the Prologue and Epilogue, which work to recontextualise the main poetic sequence. The Prologue is particularly significant in shaping the text, as it has the capacity to undermine the following long poem by pre-empting it. The narrator's plea to '[f]orgive [his] grief for one removed' exemplifies this, as the grief for his departed friend Hallam is the impetus for the entire poem – if this is forgiven, then the poem's foundation is completely negated, unmooring it from its original, poignant meaning.[3] This anxious forgiveness is repeated in his statement to '[f]orgive these wild and wandering cries, / [c]onfusions of a wasted youth', which not only undermines the text's coherence through the Prologue's interpretation of it as a directionless series of 'wandering cries', but also as 'wasted', distilling the invalidation of the whole text.[4] Hemans' poems similarly work to reinterpret the main poetic statements; however, its framing acts additively. The pretext to Hemans' 'Indian Woman's Death Song' is a prosaic recounting: two epigraphs, and then a further poetic retelling before finally conveying the woman's voice. Through centralising other perspectives, the woman is ultimately marginalised in her own poem, which acts as a heavy-handed critique of the inability of women to speak for themselves.

'Casabianca' acts in an entirely opposite way, with the expansiveness of the poem conveying a patriotic sense of adulation for the presumably English boy. Whereas the title's context of the sinking of the French *Orient* during the Battle of the Nile opposes this reading.[5] Reed's point can be traced to Hemans in a paradoxical way; the main emotive propulsion of 'Death Song' is confined beneath its pretexts that attempt to reject its emotional quality, whereas the consolidation of the historical context into the single-word title of 'Casabianca' is able to alter the entirety of the poem itself.

Poetic continuity is consistently undermined within both poets' works, reflecting the indeterminacy of the transition from the Romantic to the Victorian period. *In Memoriam* is primarily elegiac within the poetic sequence, but its Epilogue echoes an epithalamium. Peter Hinchcliffe argues that by changing genres, '[t]he Epilogue [...] does not resolve the central anxiety of *In Memoriam*', suggesting that the anxiety of the elegy infests the otherwise celebratory epithalamium.[6] However, with his interpretation of the Epilogue as a surrogate marriage for Hallam's within Section LXXXIV, Hinchcliffe's idea of only a forward revision of the epithalamium by the previous elegy is too conservative. The interruption also extends backwards, making the poem's elegiac content further indicative of an epithalamium.[7] The reversed associations with life and death in each section embodies this shift: Section LXXXIV's invocation of 'that remorseless iron hour / [making] cypress of [the bride's] orange flower' not only references the first iteration of the 'orange flower' from Section XL's conventional wedding imagery but also reforms it into a 'cypress', that suggests a sense of grief associated with Hallam.[8] Due to the exclusion of this transformed cypress in the Epilogue, the driving force of the poem is not confronted, meaning that the poem is foreshortened to end with the hypothetical marriage instead of the unsanctioned real event. Textual shortening also appears within Hemans' 'Death Song', where the woman's words are interrupted by the sounds of the water, which is foregrounded only in the descriptions that state how, 'her voice was heard [...] until overpowered by the sounds of the waters in which she perished', but not her own speech, implying she cannot corroborate the narrative.[9] Tom Mole's analysis of the Victorian anthologising of Romantic writers states that, '[a]nthologies reinforced this perception of Hemans as a writer of short, feminized lyrics through their editorial framing of her poetry', despite Hemans' aspiration towards longer poetry.[10] This perspectival shift thus links to the undercutting of the Indian woman's voice, which critiques the recontextualization of her work.

Tennyson and Hemans also target the dominant strains of Christian and imperialist belief, reversing their reputations as orthodox believer, and avowed patriot, respectively. *In Memoriam* is necessarily preoccupied with the past, which Henry Kozicki understands in his idea of Tennyson finding meaning there, proposing that the 'formative power of the past' is the '[infusion of] the whole past with the historical imagination'.[11] Through this understanding, Tennyson harnesses the past to find a God thatcan sanction his grieving.

Within Section LXIX's dream sequence, this appears in the imagery of the narrator wearing a 'crown of thorns', which aligns him with the suffering of Jesus during the crucifixion, vitalising the past and discovering meaning there.[12] The dream also begins with the destruction of nature, which is neatly resolved by the angel's appearance that 'reach'd the glory of a hand, / [t]hat seem'd to touch it into leaf' – the divine is able to not only appreciate 'the glory of a hand', sanctifying human corporeality, but also entwine it with nature's revival through the image of the 'leaf' to create an earthly unity.[13] However, this is completely undermined by the final two lines, where '[t]he voice was not the voice of grief, / [t]he words were hard to understand'.[14] Through not speaking in the language of grief, the angel becomes incomprehensible to the speaker, thereby disintegrating understanding and undermining Kozicki's argument. Hemans also holds indeterminate beliefs. As Tricia Lootens states, she not only holds unstable 'patriotic positions', but is also able to '[glorify] the courage' of various non-British armies.[15] However, her instability also extends to the glorification of the French boy of 'Casabianca' through deconstructing him as a symbolic hero. His deference becomes clear in how 'he would not go / [w]ithout his Father's word', embodying a passivity more suited to one of Hemans' domestic heroines, and the sanctification of his 'Father's word' through the capitalisation of 'Father'.[16] The battle's glorification is further nullified in the inevitable loss of Casabianca:

> The boy—oh! where was he?
> Ask of the winds that far around
> With fragments strewed the sea!—
> (Hemans, 'Casabianca', ll.34-36)

The rupture here is literal, as the ship has become 'fragments', symbolising the destruction of the poem's imperial message. The caesuras in '—oh! where was he?' act to further marginalise Casabianca from the poem. Through instead addressing colonial battle, the emptiness of the symbolic power of the heir apparent to imperialism is emphasised.

The narrative agency for both poets is lost as they become subject to narrative instead of being able to act autonomously. Rudy argued 'the space Hemans creates for passionate flow leads almost inevitably to either insanity or death', which 'Death Song' attests to, aligning with his assertion of a distinct separation between emotion and action within Hemans' poetry.[17] The unveiling in the titular woman's narration of her daughter's gender comes with a promise that she is '[t]oo bright a thing [. . .] to pine in aching love away', which expresses femininity's inherent restrictions in the compounding of '[pining]' and 'aching', which both have connotations of painful longing.[18] Such repetition represents the lack of female agency, as both are reactive and rely on the prior agency of men to function. Rudy's supposition does not go far enough in this case, however, as both she and her child are killed by the stream, with her repeated cries for the stream to 'roll on' suggesting agency, which is undermined through the final description of the stream as continually 'rolling'.[19] Tennyson also confines himself to a feminine persona in Section LX, where his speaker, through extended metaphor, becomes '[l]ike some poor girl whose heart is set / [o]n one whose rank exceeds her own'.[20] This metaphor comments on the stratification of class which separates her from her object of admiration, with the 'poor' quality of the girl acting both as an acknowledgement of sympathy and of class. She is also confined within 'that dark house where she was born', suggesting both an inescapability of her circumstances and a concern for her ability to function within her feminine role, as the 'dark house' signifies her inability to maintain order, severing her from any capacity to fulfil her role.[21] However, the final line of the section repositions the feminised metaphor as pertinent to the poem, as she despairingly asks '[h]ow should he love a thing so low'.[22] Her self-denigration as 'a thing so low' suggests that, instead of being part of another social stratum, Hallam's position is unreachable due to his elevation beyond corporeality; with the metaphoric girl separated even more from her love. The speaker, therefore, reintegrates her anxieties back into his narrative, rendering him passive and Hallam unreachable, due to the numerous boundaries between them.

Reed's disconnect between the Romantic tendency towards assimilation and the Victorian consolidation of humanity, conceptualises a rupture with nature, as harmony is replaced by an unresolvable division that tends towards annihilation of the human. Hemans' poems are notably affected by this, as 'Casabianca' assimilates its human agents into nature, with only the degree of offered resistance differing. Reed's imagery of a circle to represent Wordsworth's construction of a boundary separating humanity and the natural world is evident within Hemans' poetry, but the circle of human free will is always drawn towards collapse through the imposition of nature in 'Casabianca'. The poem's nature initially threatens '[t]he flame that lit the battle's wreck / [shining] round him o'er the dead' to imply a nearby natural circle, but as the flames encroach closer, they end up having 'wrapt the ship in splendour wild' (3–4, 29). This 'wrapt' ship connotes the covering of dead bodies with a shroud, indicating that nature's eradication of humanity is close by. This final action is amplified by the previous line, where '[t]he wreathing fires made way' – the 'wreathing' of the fires portrays the boy's memorial through the funereal wreath laying, as the flames' arrival is at this point inevitable (28). Reed conceives Tennyson's circle instead as 'the cycle of seasonal movement', which continually traps Tennyson in a cycle of confinement and release, eventually ending with ultimate emancipation. However, the scope of Tennyson's escape remains dubious, as the apparent movement away from grief is questioned through the poem's referentiality, exemplified by the repetition of Christmas three times. Sections XXVIII and Section CIV, as the first and last invocations of Christmas, begin identically, but then deviate, as XXVIII's imagery of '[t]he Christmas bells from hill to hill / [a]nswer each other in the mist' makes way for '[a] single church below the hill / [i]s pealing, folded in the mist'.[27] While the first image is deployed to remind the speaker of what he cannot have in a peaceful community, the second reminds him of how far he has come from his prior grief. This ironic self-referentiality traps the speaker within the cycle and ruptures any sense of returning to normality. For both speakers, their constructs are inalienably trapped.

Tennyson's In Memoriam and Hemans' 'Casabianca' and 'Indian Woman's Death Song' are therefore embedded within a universalised rupture, with the poets invoking the destruction of previously stable signifiers to address the anxieties of the period. The rupture of the poems' formal qualities, and therefore the relation to

the content being questioned, leads to an atmosphere of obsessive redefinition that cannot end. The isolation of the poets is therefore necessary, as rupture becomes endemic within not only their works, but also within the literary landscape and the advent of Victorianism. However, Tennyson and Hemans do not speak for other contemporary writers. This may elicit the question of whether any quintessential Romantic or Victorian writer who aligns themselves with one period, can ever retain stability, or is inevitably subject to rupture themselves.

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[24] Ibid., p.356.
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Luke Bryan English Literature

The Conflict of African American Religious Identity in Langston Hughes' *The Big Sea*

JAY MITRA, American Studies

Compared to his poetry, religion in Langston Hughes' autobiography *The Big Sea*, released in 1940, has only been examined intermittently by scholars.[1] Mary Culp's close reading of religion in Hughes' poetry argues that 'religious feeling is always interdependent with racial feeling'.[2] Michael Thurston, meanwhile, suggests Hughes' poetry 'challenges both religious and cultural norms', while Wallace Best insists that 'one cannot fully understand Langston Hughes without careful examination of his thoughts about God, the church, religious institutions and people'.[3] Yet despite the attention paid to religion in Hughes' poetry, few have considered *The Big Sea*'s place in the debate, with its provocative attempts to facilitate a more politicised form of Christianity. By close reading the chapter 'Salvation' in *The Big Sea*, which runs for around two pages, I suggest that his autobiography's depiction of religion was not merely a factual recounting, but rather that Hughes illuminates religion's dominance to advocate a reshaping of it. Allison Calhoun-Brown stresses religion's integrality in the African American experience and its capacity to increase and politicise 'racial identification through group consciousness'.[4] Building on her ideas, I argue Hughes' autobiography frames the power and multifaceted nature of religion in a politicised way. Hughes exemplifies Henry Louis Gates' theory of Signifyin(g) — repurposing literary texts and tropes — by ironically, and parodically, reshaping Christianity for political emancipation.[5] Ultimately, my argument encourages scholars to contemplate the role of Christianity in emancipatory Black politics. Christianity, I suggest, can be, and regularly, employed politically by people like Hughes, despite his own personal ambivalence about it.

Consideration of current scholarship on Hughes' The Big Sea is essential. Mary Beth Culp identifies a passage detailing Hughes' 'conversion' to Christianity without any specific analysis, instead stating that Hughes 'views religion in the larger context of black culture'.[6] Culp argues that Hughes presents organised religion variously as 'a source of strength for the oppressed, an opiate of the people, the religion of slavery, and an obstacle to emancipation'. However, she does not identify which category *The Big Sea* falls into. The several syntactical choices in the conversion passage reveal a much more domineering and pressurised side to religious institutions in the Black community. But before elaborating, it is important to establish that during this period of his life, Hughes lived with a religious foster aunt — Auntie Reed — who made him attend church and Sunday school. Her husband on the other hand was a 'sinner and never went to church as long as he lived, nor cared anything about it' (p. 41). Despite their theological differences, Hughes expresses fondness for them, affirming they were 'very good and kind', and that they taught him to 'like both Christians and sinners equally'. Reiterating the positive impact Auntie Reed had on Hughes is necessary to fully grasp his decision to fake a conversion at a church service. In 'Salvation"s exposition, Hughes notes that 'every night for weeks there had been much preaching, singing, praying and shouting, and some very hardened sinners had been brought to Christ' (p. 41). Hughes presents the service as incessant, with the determiner 'every' emphasising the vast quantity of these religious gatherings. He implies that it is the church's doggedness that facilitates the conversion of 'hardened sinners', with this persistence being further illuminated by the verb 'escorted', used by Hughes to describe the 'young sinners' being brought to prayer. 'Escorted' subtly acknowledges Black elders' trepidation of the young straying from the faith and their belief that 'sinners' needed extra chaperoning. The word also suggests that the symbolic transition to the front was enforced by peer pressure, thus implying that young people faced a lack of autonomy within the Black church. Salvation ironically becomes just another enforced social custom, despite its premise of spiritual freedom.

When describing his Aunt's view of salvation there is a tinge of satirical irony in his repeated use of exclamation marks, writing that '[m]y aunt told me that when you were saved you saw a light, and something happened to you inside! And Jesus came into your life!' These exclamations invoke a childlike astonishment of the wonders of salvation, mimicking the energy of the enthusiastic Pentecostal style of preaching, and could represent Hughes sarcastically mocking his Aunt's bold claims of divine intervention. This satire is reiterated when he states that 'a great many old people say the same thing and it seemed to me that they ought to know'. By emphasising the quantity, via 'a great many', Hughes portrays church as intense, with lexical choice of 'ought' demonstrating his trust in his elders' knowledge and ability to guide him. Norrence T. Jones argues that Black elders at the time worked hard to instil 'a strong spirit' and 'discrete rules to govern' in the younger generation.[7] Building on his point, Hughes' passage reveals that Black elders equally applied these stringent rules and belief in maintaining a strong spirit to the notion of spirituality. In the same way that these rules and strong spirit 'assured that the struggle against bondage would not be gendered', they equally influenced younger generations to believe the struggle against racial slavery and white supremacy would be inherently Christian.[8] However, binding the fight for emancipation to religion would seem to be, rather ironically, another restriction, with Hughes' depiction of pressurised Christianity demonstrating the sheer persuasive power religion enjoyed as part of the African American experience. Nevertheless, Hughes' description of the 'wonderful rhythmical sermon, all moans and shouts and lonely cries and dire pictures of hell' would seem to support Calhoun-Brown's argument that religion can be used, oftentimes quite literally, as 'an instrument for social change'.[9] By emphasising the sonorous

and aural qualities of the sermon, Hughes demonstrates a meaningful study in how some African Americans respond to the troubles of life, like racism, through a devout and jubilant spirituality. The negative aspect of it, however, according to Hughes is when elders then attempt to enforce such rigorous faith onto other members of the Black community at the expense of their own agency and beliefs.

Hughes' description of the power behind religion is further emphasised in the hyperbolic statement 'the whole building rocked with prayer and song'. The verb 'rocked' has a double meaning: one of a comforting shaking motion, like that of a baby in a mother's arms, and another implying the moving power of music. Nevertheless, both meanings relate a powerful sense of rhythm to the reader. In particular, the latter, more obviously musical connotation, is made all the more clear because many of the Black church's spiritual songs share a deep affinity with blues music. As Arnold Rampersad writes, '[s]pirituals are 'choral and communal', the blues 'solo and individual'. One is 'intensely religious', the other 'just as intently worldly".[10] I firmly agree with Rampersad's point that 'Hughes was fascinated and inspired by the dynamic role of religion in black Americans', as the dynamic role of religion is particularly prevalent in the scene of his fake conversion. Hughes describes how:

> It was very hot in the church, and getting late now. Finally Westley said to me in a whisper: 'God damn! I'm tired o' sitting here. Let's get up and be saved'. So he got up and was saved. (Hughes, p. 42)

Religious pressure is given the dynamic ability to move those towards salvation. Despite Westley not experiencing anything spiritual, he felt the dynamic force of religious pressure to propel him to 'get up and be saved' anyway. Hughes' initial resistance is met with a heightened emotional intensity of prayer:

> My aunt came and knelt at my knees and cried, while prayers and songs swirled all around me in the little church. The whole congregation prayed for me alone, in a mighty wail of moans and voices.

The use of 'swirled all around me' portrays religious chanting as an intoxicating experience, with the noun phrase 'a mighty wail of moans and voices' reiterating the powerful and emotionally charged quality of Black church services. When juxtaposed with Hughes being 'alone', this implies that he felt simultaneously surrounded and yet alienated, as if in a state of spiritual double consciousness. The pressure to convert heightens with the minister's unrelenting interrogatives:

> 'My dear child, why don't you come to Jesus? Jesus is waiting for you. He wants you. Why don't you, come? Sister Reed, what is this child's name?'
> 'Langston', my aunt sobbed.
> 'Langston, why don't you come? Why don't you come and be saved? Oh, Lamb of God! Why don't you come?' (Hughes, p.42)

The passage is almost comic in its chaotic description, with Hughes' inscribing the scene with a strange hilarity in being called to meet something invisible. Eventually Langston states that 'it was really getting late. I began to be ashamed of myself, holding everything up so long'. He ultimately decides to lie and get up to 'save further trouble', fulfilling Rampersad's depiction of religion as a dynamic and motivating force. His movement towards 'conversion' results in a powerful response from the church, as 'the whole room broke into a sea of shouting as they saw me rise. Waves of rejoicing swept the place'. Later that night however, filled with guilt from lying to his Aunt and the congregation and coupled with his lack of belief in Jesus, Hughes is spurred into a fit of intense disillusionment, describing how he 'cried, in bed alone, and couldn't stop'. Hughes' depiction of religion here is complex and multifaceted, and is ultimately demonstrative of the writer's complex relationship with the faith that, while inspiring his fellow Black Americans to see beyond quotidian misery, traps younger people into a strict order imposed by their elders. Firstly, to Hughes religious institutions are likely full of people faking their own spirituality because of some form of pressure, likely from their elders who expect it from them. Secondly, the church has the power to mobilise people in doing things they are reluctant to — A persuasive force which could be easily politicised to become an instrument of social change. And finally, that not authentically engaging with religion can be alienating and heartbreaking, as shown by Hughes' breakdown over his dishonesty and the conclusion Christ may not be real. As Rampersad notes, religion was 'a binding force for many black people', hence this period in Hughes' life offers a life-altering revelation.[11] If he is to reject religion he may well be weakening the binding force between himself and many other Black people, and to weaken this force is to weaken the group identity, thus reducing chances of complete emancipation.

The prevalence of religious motifs and Biblical characters in Hughes' later poems, were likely the result of that time spent with his religious foster Aunt. This period awakened Hughes to the power of religious institutions within the Black community — A power he weaponizes in his own depictions of Christ, like in the poem 'Christ in Alabama', for political mobilisation. In his essay 'My Adventures As A Social Poet', he notes that many people misinterpreted 'Goodbye Christ' as an anti-Christian poem. Hughes states that his intention was actually 'just the opposite. Satirical, even ironic, in style', and that he meant it to be a poem opposing those 'misusing religion for worldly or profitable purposes'.[12] Nevertheless, the backlash the poem received was intense and greatly impeded his career. According to Hughes, this backlash essentially proved the point he was making, 'that the church might as well bid Christ goodbye if his gospel were left in the hands of such people'. The people, he describes, are those who weaponise their religion to pressure and manipulate others into doing their bidding — just like Hughes' own experience of pressured conversion as a youth at a church service.

To conclude, Hughes' continued use of religion in his writing, despite the elusiveness of his personal beliefs, demonstrates his knowledge of religion's importance in the African American experience. By employing alternative representations of Christianity in his work, as seen in his poems 'Christ in Alabama' and the 'Salvation' passage in *The Big Sea*, Hughes reveals and perpetuates religion as

a powerful, persuasive, and dynamic force within the Black community. To ignore and outwardly reject religion, as shown in *The Big Sea*, would likely lead to alienation and heartache, thus destabilising the journey towards liberation. Alternatively, politicising religious themes would reach a larger proportion of the Black community due to its centrality in the African American experience, and that, in using religion's emotional intensity as a rhetorical and organisational tool, could propel the Black community forwards into freedom. Despite any single writer's opinions about it, religion can ultimately be used in writing as a force for change. When asked about his religious beliefs, Hughes' stated simply and powerfully that '[t]here's great beauty in the mysticism of much religious writing, and great help there too'.[13]

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Jay Mitra American Studies

‘Is Not Thy Soul Thy Own?’ Agency and Control in *Doctor Faustus*

AMELIA GROUNSELL, English Literature

Upon reading Christoper Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*, it becomes abundantly clear that Faustus willingly gives his sould to the devil. It is then, subsequently, his own actions that ensure his downfall. This essay will stress this idea throughout. Marlowe has Faustus persevere with the act of signing the contract despite the congealing of his blood with the protest, "Is not thy soul thy own" and as such confirms the autonomy of Faustus’ actions.

Repeatedly, Faustus is given the opportunity to walk down a different path by studying a different discipline such as using his gifts for good or repenting.[1] However, he continually makes the choice to maintain his contract with Mephistopheles and repledges his soul to Satan. Faustus presents himself as being a helpless plaything of God who cannot resist his fate but, characteristically, this is self-deceit to excuse his wicked actions and wasted potential. Throughout the play, Faustus has autonomy although he is far more susceptible to sin and the devil once he has pledged his soul as Mephistopheles is ever present. His soul is not dragged to Hell until after his contract has ended.

Act One, Scene One is dedicated to Faustus’ introduction to necromancy, a method of divination that practices communication with the dead. After weighing up the merits of several disciplines and deciding that they are insufficient to meet his overwhelming ambition, Faustus consciously turns to magic. Faustus chooses his path of his own accord and is not forced into it by any other power. Faustus deceptively presents magic as his salvation from a life of ordinariness through religious language. “Necromantic books are heavenly,” and will make Faustus “a mighty God”.[2] [3] Here Faustus presents magic as a good option, superior to religion rather than the means of damnation. Society at the time was very aware of the supernatural world, Faustus is clearly deceiving himself by not considering the negative consequences of pursuing necromancy. This is reinforced through the unusual absense of the supernatural in this scene compared to other scenes in the play. Marlowe, through this, highlights that Faustus is not tempted by a demon or an Evil Angel to choose necromancy. He arrives at that decision entirely by himself after logically weighing up the other options available for him and deciding that none of them meet his lofty ambition.

Not only does Faustus deceive himself into believing that magic will unlock all that he desires without any consequences, but Faustus also willingly withholds truth from himself so that he can justify abandoning other studies. When weighing up the merits of divinity Faustus partially quotes Romans 6:23 and 1 John 1:8 to make the church seem unfair and harsh:

> "Stipendium peccati mors est.” Ha! Stipendium etc. The reward of sin is death. That’s hard. [Reads.] “Si piccasse negamus, fallimur, Et nulla est nobis vertitas.” If we say that we have no sin We decieve ourselves, and there’s no truth in us.[4]

Faustus intentionally misses out the more merciful and benevolent parts of these scriptures about forgiveness through Christ. Romans 6:23 ends “but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord,”[5] and 1 John 1:8 ends “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”[6] In only quoting the first half Faustus gives himself a reason to dismiss divinity and move towards necromancy. He is making the choice to head along a path that will lead to damnation while convincing the audience that it is the only reasonable option available for him. Faustus is deceptive and his words cannot be taken as the full truth.

The peripeteia of the play is the moment when Faustus signs the contract in his own blood and thus becomes closely entwined with Mephistopheles who makes it more difficult for Faustus to change his mind. The signing of the contract is a conscious action that Faustus makes and his awareness of what he is doing is emphasised by the congealing of his blood. Faustus considers that this omen might be a sign that his own body is “unwilling [he] should write this bill,”but continues in his decision to write it.[7] The effort he must put in to sign the contract shows that he is signing it of his own discretion despite knowing the consequences. Furthermore, if Faustus were already predestined to damnation, then surely his body would not fight against his fate. Therefore, it must be Faustus who has made the decision to sell his soul to the devil. It might be suggested that at this point Faustus’ soul belongs to hell and Satan because he has signed the contract. However, if this were the case Mephistopheles would not need to tempt Faustus to ensure that he does not repent. Faustus’ soul remains his own until his death when his ability to make decisions ceases.

Throughout the play, Faustus is given the option to repent or to stay on the course that he has begun towards damnation. Continually, Faustus chooses Satan and hell rather than repentance and Heaven which suggests that even after he has pledged his soul in blood, he has some control over it. Although more susceptible to Hell after signing the contract because of Mephistopheles’ near constant presence, Faustus retains the ability to choose. The first instance of the adversary tempting Faustus with “delight”, so that he will not turn away from his promise, comes immediately after the contract is signed.[8] Mephistopheles’ show of Devils “giving crowns and rich apparel to Faustus” can only be an attempt to distract him from the

unsettling phrase "homo, fuge" which appears on his arm.[9] [10] The performance displays the benefits of Faustus' choice, namely wealth and delight, to distract him from the desire to change his mind. This would not be necessary if Faustus did not have any other choice and his soul already belonged to the Devil. The effort to save Faustus by warning him to flee is a weak effort compared to the physical presence of the Devils on stage. Faustus can dismiss the presence of the writing quickly believing that his "senses are deceived."[11] The audience would have been unable to see any writing on the arm of Faustus but would have clearly seen the performance of the Devils. After signing the contract, Faustus is less susceptible to the powers of Heaven because he is strongly under the influence of Hell. However, this does not mean that he has lost control of his soul, it just suggests that Faustus is closer to Hell than Heaven.

This pattern is repeated when Faustus is brought to the point of repentance by the discourse of his Good and Evil Angels before reaffirming his commitment to Lucifer after the distraction of the seven deadly sins. The Evil Angel tells Faustus that it is "too late" suggesting that Hell already has Faustus' soul.[12] However, the Evil Angel cannot be trusted to tell the truth as he represents unrighteousness and corruption. Lucifer too cannot be trusted as he is deceptive and the father of lies.[13] The seven deadly sins provide an element of comedy which convinces Faustus that sin is more appealing than repentance. Gluttony ironically describes its "bare pension" and lechery's sexual innuendo about "an ell of fried-stock fish" is comedic.[14] [15] Faustus is distracted from his more serious thoughts about the state of his soul and repentance by the amusing caricatures of the seven deadly sins. The audience would not trust the portraits of the seven deadly sins as truthful as they would have a religious understanding of the consequences of sin and would have seen through the deceptive presentation. By accepting the positive presentation of the seven deadly sins and not arguing against it, Faustus is allowing himself to be deceived and the audience would have been aware of this.

Faustus uses tricks and illusions throughout the play including the illusion of the horse he sells to the horse-courser and the image of Alexander the Great and his paramour. Faustus' trickery suggests that he is a deceptive individual and what he says cannot be trusted. Kristen Poole highlights how real the supernatural world was to a contemporary audience and argues that Faustus' scepticism of Hell "estranges him from... most of his contemporaries".[16] Poole discusses the theme of shape-changing in the play and links it to Lucifer who was believed to be able to create the illusion of transformation. To apply Poole's argument, Lucifer and the manifestations of his power are not to be believed in the play because he is illusive and intangible. A contemporary audience would not have believed Faustus when he claimed that "Hell's a fable" and would have found it difficult to believe that Faustus could believe that himself.[17] Faustus is surrounded by demons and the conjuring of the devil. Believing that hell is not real is self-deception and this suggest that, through a belief that God "loves [him] not"and that Faustus cannot repent, he is intentionally keeping himself in a state of despair so that he can justify his actions by accepting Lucifer's message.[18] Faustus continues to have control over his soul throughout the play but by choosing to believe that he is unable to repent, and hell is not real, Faustus deceives himself into believing that he has no other choice.

Faustus' soul does not appear to belong to God either. Calvinism would suggest that God has complete control over Faustus and the eventual fate of his soul. Alan Sinfield argues that Calvinist ideas would mean that Faustus' character was formed by God and Faustus can only repent if God lets him.[19] This would mean that Faustus' fatal flaws, his ambition and insatiability, both cause him to make poor choices but were also put there by God. As a result, Faustus' soul is not his own from the beginning, but it already belongs to Hell because Faustus is damned from before the play begins. Sinfield also argues that as "repentance is not something for the individual to achieve, but a divine gift," Faustus can say the words of repentance but not actually repent.[20] Faustus can speak the words "ah, Christ my Saviour/ Seek to save distressed Faustus' soul" and it will make no difference.[21]

However, the honesty of Faustus' repentance is difficult to establish as he is a man that uses deception to further his own end. Prior to making this effort, he explains that his "heart's so hardened I cannot repent" which would suggest that his attempt is ingenuine.[22] Furthermore, Faustus does little more than say the words of repentance, he does not act on it and instead recommits to his contract with the devil. This would suggest that rather than God not allowing Faustus to repent, like Sinfield claims, Faustus is choosing not to. Similarly, throughout the play, Marlowe gives God little presence. Unlike Lucifer, God does not get a physical representation on the stage and the only manifestation of Heaven comes through the good angel. This might suggest that Marlowe does not believe that God has the power to form every aspect of a person's character and control the fate of their soul. Therefore, God has little influence over Faustus and Faustus has more control over his soul than the divine.

Faustus has control over his destiny and therefore his soul is his own. Throughout the play he is given choices and Faustus continually chooses to believe the lies of Lucifer and Mephistopheles as well as his own lies so that he can remain in a state of despair without repentance. The need for Faustus to reassert his commitment to the devil suggests that, until his contract ends and he loses the ability to choose, Faustus is capable of repentance and directing the course of his life. Faustus consciously and repeatedly chooses the damnation of his own free will.

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Amelia Grounsell English Literature,

A Second Genesis

GABRIELLE LABONNE, Creative Writing

My treasures. This bounty of small graces, left and right —
a doe wobbling to attention in a nearby green,
ears erect and pointed to her surroundings
as she assesses reality from a new vantage point;
the winds, slipping
through wild crevices of the treetops,
softly fondling the foliage as they go —

fill what was once a modern hellscape.

Where pungent residue inseminated my streams
and my earth was gouged and torn
to make way for forbearing creations.
The very creatures I owe my essence, revived.

As a matriarch accepts the gift of a new residence from her children,
a plush throne to spend the day
reclined in, resting her tired bones,
similar still I sit, as intended.
The gift, once forced from my hand,
now lovingly returned.
And my fingers, cracked and scorched as they were,
were pecked and nursed and soaked in the balmy tears
of the ones whom I hold so dear.

Some may call it *luddism*, *peculiar*, *regressive*, *romantic*,
but the rosiness of seasons promised is hopeful.
In the reeds and rice that spill from me,
poured by my former captors,
my children.

The ache of my heart is replaced with the souls who pass through me,
whose names and impressions are hand sewn into my flesh,
complexly woven from a single thread.
Who feed me with their might,
and retread my tissue with a desire for something better.

Gabrielle Labonne Creative Writing

Childhood, Perspective and Perception in Katherine Mansfield's 'How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped' and 'The Wind Blows'

MEAH WORSENCROFT, English Literature

Through an aesthetic focus upon shifting perspectives and perceptions, Katherine Mansfield's modernist short stories channel Virginia Woolf's argument that 'life exists more fully in what is commonly thought big than what is commonly called small'.[1] Underpinning Woolf's seminal essay 'Modern Fiction' is the idea that perspective guides perception – the position at which we see something directly influences the way in which we perceive it. Therefore, to gain a fuller experience and understanding of life, we must encounter and appreciate many different points of view and develop a multifaceted means of perspective. Literature as a form can channel this, through narratorial perspectives and characterisation and Mansfield experiments with this through polyphony, layering multiple points of view. Woolf's choice of verbs further emphasises the role of perspective – 'thought big' (Woolf, p.161) implies not that it is necessarily large, just that it is perceived to be and therefore may not be thought of in this way by everyone, highlighting the importance of perspective.[2] Mansfield's 1912 short story 'The Kidnapping of Pearl Button' demonstrates perspective's role in guiding the reader's interpretation of events since the text follows a young girl, Pearl Button, who travels with two Māori women to visit their settlement whilst her mother, unaware of this, irons inside. Similarly, 'The Wind Blows' assesses the proportionalities of issues under different points of view through Matilda's relationship with the wind and her memories.

Mansfield's short story 'How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped' adopts the perspective of a child, through free indirect discourse, to examine the cultural clashes between Māori settlements and the metropolis of European civilisation, the 'House of Boxes', from an unfiltered point of view.[3] The minds of children have not yet been refined by cultural knowledge and social mores, and whilst this raw perspective is typically represented as limiting and a position of innocence or ignorance, Mansfield reframes the outlook of children, allowing the reader to regain a degree of this blissful naivety through the child-centred narrative to escape the corrupted constraints of colonialist thinking that dominates society. The name 'Pearl Button' is reminiscent of a traditional children's book character, but in the story's title it is sharply juxtaposed by the word 'kidnapped'), exposing the story's plot to the reader before they read it.[4] [5] This also shapes the way in which the text is read, as throughout the story the word 'kidnap' (Mansfield, p.20) is not explicitly used, but by framing the story with the idea of kidnap from the title the reader expects a kidnapping and this is subverted by the narrative itself that presents the women not as Pearl's kidnappers, but as her liberators. The title's disconnection from the rest of the story disrupts preconceived ideas of a dangerous tale of abduction and their perception of events is altered through narrative shifts that unsettle the plot and instead denote an enriching and natural experience. By viewing the events from an unknown third person narrator that emphasises a child's perspective, Mansfield invites the reader to identify with Pearl and understand it not as an abduction, but a moment of liberation.

Pearl's home is labelled as 'House of Boxes' creating an image of suburbia that is small, simplistic, restrictive and generic. The repeated image of 'boxes' bears a sense of emptiness and presents the houses as means of storage and containment rather than homeliness. In juxtaposition with the unwelcoming nature of the 'House of Boxes' is the Māori women, who are described by the narrator as 'softer than a bed' and 'warm as a cat'.[6] These similes are simplistic and mainly monosyllabic, employing the phraseology of a child and clearly expressing how Pearl finds comfort from them. The story's ending entails Pearl giving out a 'frightful scream' (Mansfield, p.23) when approached by the police but remaining throughout unafraid of her kidnappers.[7] The 'little blue men' are never fully referred to as the police, showing Pearl's unawareness.[8] However, this representation of them offers their identity to the reader through dramatic irony whilst the focus on 'blue coats' strips away the power and authority that is usually associated with the uniform because, in the eyes of a child, it is just a colour.[9] Although it appears the story is telling the tale of a one girl and her experiences, it is demonstrating a much larger picture of contemporary cultural clashes and the tension between a world of freedoms and a world of constraints.

Woolf's argument about perception is crystallized by Mansfield in the scene in which Pearl Button first sees the sea. From a distance, the sea appears as 'a great big piece of blue water' that is 'creeping over the land' .[10] Pearl appears terrified by this and 'scream(s)' , clutching the women in fear of this unknown body of water.[11] However, Pearl's attitudes towards the sea rapidly changes as she enters it and sees it from a new perspective up close, repeatedly calling it 'lovely' as she paddles but also noticing that when she picked it up it 'stopped being blue in her hands'.[12] [13] The water from far away appears powerful as it is described with active verbs such as 'creeping' (Mansfield, p.22) and appears colourful and 'blue' but up close it loses this quality, almost as if it has been drained or diluted.[14] Therefore, when the sea is seen in its entire body from a distanced perspective it is powerful and alive in its fullest, but up close it loses some of that power and vitality. Away from civilisation, Pearl enjoys nature and experiences an awakening as she is granted a new perspective that broadens her horizons and sensory boundaries in which her emotions are a product of her perception – she finds comfort in her kidnappers and the sea because she does

not perceive them as a threat.

'The Wind Blows' presents how issues appear on differing levels of importance and severity according to different perspectives. The small issues such as a 'snapped' hat elastic or a shredded 'Tenerife-work teacloth' compound together to create an emotional response of frustration.[15] As these small moments of agitation climax, underlying issues arise and manifest in disguise as reactions to the smaller issues. In this short story, Mansfield explores the tumultuous journey of adolescence through the repeated metaphor of the wind blowing, a symbol of changes coming. The ending presents how distance influences perspective, as when the protagonist leaves on the boat and waves goodbye to the 'little island' she is able to view the area from an altered perspective and the original problems appear in their minimised state of reality. [16] This is further developed by the shift in perspective from the piano lesson when the narrative shifts from storytelling of the event into the future where it is a mere memory and the distance created by time alongside the benefit of hindsight alters the characters perspective again, allowing her to laugh at it despite crying at the time and exclaiming dramatically that 'life is so dreadful'. [17] Whilst in the moment, her troubles appear disproportionately large and overwhelming but with the altered perspective and maturity she can see that they are smaller and seemingly irrelevant. Perspective guides perception and distance causes what was once thought 'big' to appear 'small' (Woolf, p.161) as the significance of issues alter according to our proximities.[18]

Matilda's visionary moment of seeing herself on the ship is a productive change in perspective that appears to arrive with adulthood, allowing her to see a direction of her future towards freedom. However, the sudden shift in narrative to this moment that presents the two siblings on the land as disjointedly imagining themselves as the 'brother and sister' on the boat suggests this is little more than a daydream whilst refusing to cement the grounds of reality, leaving the ending of the story open to interpretation from the reader.[19] The role of the wind is an active force of movement that disrupts each scene, acting as a transitional emblem between moments in place of plot-driven narrative shifts.

Matilda's mother does not want her to attend her music lesson and demands that she returns, exclaiming 'come back immediately!'[20] This could suggest that her mother is struggling with the changes in her daughter as she grows up, and Mansfield contrasts this with the cyclical structure of the wind enforcing its permanence and power as a natural force for change that cannot be stopped. Matilda pushes against the boundaries of her mother and the domestic sphere and once away from the confines of her everyday life whilst she is freely looking out at the sea, experiencing liberation through both maturity and using her imagination to expand her horizons. Symbolically letting go of her childhood, Matilda waves 'good-bye'(Mansfield, p.78) to her previous stresses and experiences an elevated awakening that encompasses the bigger picture whilst widening her perspectives as subscribing to conventions is limiting.[21]

Both 'The Wind Blows' and 'The Kidnapping of Pearl Button' have no proper sense of time frame nor structure. The stories are very narrowly focused on specific moments, but the narrative shifts used to distort perspectives create a disjointed sense of fluidity to the moments – they are seemingly asynchronous and it does not matter which specific time they are from. There are notable protagonist characters that Mansfield targets through free indirect discourse to show us their inner thoughts and emotions with the distance of a third person narrator. There is no backstory to either Pearl or Matilda and the other characters remain anonymous, with no name and little attention to the storyline, just mere presences. This specificity of moment meets Woolf's call for a version of modern fiction dictated not by plot or characterisation but by emotion and thought, as she instructs writers to 'examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day.'

The act of 'small' images representing 'big' ideas is prevalent across Mansfield's short stories, as critic Lorenzo Mari argues there is 'implied national allegory' within her 'representations of the family' in stories such as 'The Kidnapping of Pearl Button'.[24] Mansfield urges the reader to re-evaluate their own perspectives, not just necessarily in reading her stories but beyond and into their own lives, encouraging a broadening of horizons and awakening to perspectives other than that of the majority or tradition. Mansfield disarms the reader of their expectations by sculpting this child-like narrative lens and by reframing mundane presumptions, an act that Victor Shklovsky argues is 'the purpose of art' – 'to impart the sensation of things as they as perceived and not as they are known'.[25] [26] Mansfield interconnects perspective with perception to provide us with a multidimensional point of view that and make the everyday 'unfamiliar'.

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Meah Worsencroft English Literature,

Monstrous Androgyny and the Desirability of Bodies in Ridley Scott's *Alien*

CARYS RICHARDS, English Literature

C.W. Discussions of sexual violence.

Directed by Ridley Scott and distributed by 20th Century Fox, *Alien* (1979) has stood the test of time and remains one of the most disturbing sci-fi horror films to date. Its upsetting gestalt of sexually coded violence, perpetrated by the hermaphroditic Xenomorph, marks it as the ideal medium through which to explore the complex, and oftentimes contradictory, ways that bodies are coded as desirable and undesirable onscreen. Drawing from Barbara Creed's seminal work *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*, in this essay I will argue that rather being the rooted in man's fear of woman as castrator, as Creed does from a Freudian perspective, the ultimate horror of the monstrous female imagery depicted in Alien is its construction of the female figure as unfortunate and thus undesirable to be.[1] While the alien can be read in several ways, I will focus on its monstrous-femininity in relation to the undesirable hypersexual heteropatriarchy, before arguing through the Freudian lens of horror-as-repressed-desire that the androgyny and sexual ambivalence of the Xenomorph, not to mention the film's unstable gender semiotics, represent a fantasy space for expressing deviant desires. Ultimately, the Xenomorph and the transplantation of gendered experience is only horrifying within the misogynistic mindset that to be or become woman, to invoke the language of Simone de Beavoir, is a terrible thing. In a possibly transhuman or transgender reading, the power of the Xenomorph, a voracious pansexual monster that embodies both the phallic and the gynic, serves as a fantasy of escape from binaries and the suffocating repression of id described above.

The moment which perhaps best encapsulates the film's use of body horror and intense sexual imagery is the iconic chestburster scene which catalyses the second act.[2] Cutting between characters in medium close up shot, we hear Parker (Yaphet Kotto) make a euphemistic comment toward Lambert (Veronica Cartwright), the only other woman onboard the Nostromo aside from Ripley (Sigourney Weaver), about desire for oral sex ('I'd rather be eating something else'), quickly establishing the sexual nature of this scene within the subtext of a simple piece of dialogue.[3] This carnal language is paired with a series of shot-reverse-shots between alternating members of the crew and Kane (John Hurt), with the slow zoom onto the victim's body raising the scene's tension all the while hinting at the violent event which is yet to come. Monstrous-feminine characteristics are soon forced upon the male Kane in this graphic moment as the newborn alien physically bursts out of his chest, and we realise that the earlier moment in which the facehugger appeared to have been simply 'feeding him oxygen' was in fact a more hideous oral rape, with the phallic, tail-like appendage with which Kane was orally penetrated having being used by the alien to fertilise itself within him.[4] Here, Kane becomes an involuntary male mother to the Xenomorph's next stage of life. As Barbara Creed argues in *The Monstrous-Feminine* '[w]hen male bodies become grotesque, they tend to take on characteristics associated with female bodies; in this instance man's body becomes grotesque because it is capable of being penetrated [...]. But man, not woman, is the "mother" and Kane dies in agony as the alien gnaws its way through his stomach'.[5] In what is essentially an exaggerated birthing scene, the genuine reactions of the cast heighten this abjection of the biologically female, and the displacement of childbirth onto a male body alienates the audience from the process as a natural occurrence and turns it into something undesirable, abject, and Other.[6] Creed goes on to write that 'man's fascination with and fear of female sexuality is endlessly reworked within the signifying practices of the horror film' and this is certainly true as reproduction and birth become the foundation for the shocking imagery of the scene.[7] As we have already seen however, its horror comes from masculine projection and the fear of becoming woman, of having the suffering of it forced onto them. On the one hand, we can read this abjection of the feminine into disturbing imagery as well as the uncomfortable feminisation of Kane as manifestations of misogyny into body horror in a film that 'speaks to us more about male fears than about female desire or feminine subjectivity'.[8] Nevertheless, it is ultimately more captivating, and more applicable, to read this subjection of female suffering onto the male body through a feminist lens: it is clearly undesirable to be female. What the characters and the film's implicitly male spectators truly fear is being subject to the rape, impregnation, and subsequent birthing through which Kane suffers. The displacement onto Kane alongside the graphic visual effects forces male audiences to empathise with the horror of female bodily processes and experiences. Through this lens, the alien itself becomes a manifestation of the hypersexual heteropatriarchy, and the abjection of and focus on femininity is more so an abjection of, and a focusing on, female suffering.

The intention of screenwriter Dan O'Bannon and artist H.R. Giger — designer of the Xenomorph and much of the alien architecture seen in the film — was to create a creature that specifically terrified male audiences through its sexuality. In fact, O'Bannon specifically wanted the symbolism of 'homosexual oral rape' to discomfort male viewers in both its physical implication and the more psychological notion of emasculation.[9] Each time the alien attacks a male member of the ship, it is with its erect, phallic tongue which penetrates their mouths, an area which has been explicitly sexualised by the oral impregnation of Kane. Furthermore, when the female Lambert is attacked, the extreme close up of her leg and pan up while the alien appendage creeps upwards has crude, sexual implications. On the

one hand, this hypersexual, penetrative violence lends itself to the reading that Alien intends to disturb heterosexual male audiences into inciting sympathy for women with regards to their treatment under heteropatriarchy. However, this *prima facie* fear and disgust towards the Xenomorph belies the fact that, within the spectacle of the horror film, there is also an element of 'perverse pleasure' which many audience members derive from witnessing its violent psychosexual acts, ultimately implying a Freudian desire for these more taboo sexual proclivities.[10]

Although Creed's focus is on the monstrous-feminine and the female coding of the Xenomorph and its offspring, it is also clear that *Alien* constructs abject deviance from the traditional binaries of sex and gender. One can read the Xenomorph, then, through two lenses: as representative of non-conformist gender and sexuality rather than of femininity, and thus serving as a conservative tool for instilling fear of the undesirable Other; or instead a more nuanced psychosexual approach in which the Xenomorph becomes an actor in an id-driven power fantasy. I am inclined to read these nuances under a Freudian lens of fears as repressed desires — the desire for escape from the heteropatriarchal structures of society manifests as the genderless, pansexual Xenomorph. There is an unmistakable sexual ambivalence within the body and behaviours of the alien: not only is the chestburster a phallic form which emerges from a male mother, but at no stage of life does it seem singularly male nor female. It also spawns from the eggs of an implied female mother, in a ship whose mise-en-scène is distinctly biomechanical, but manages to reproduce parthenogenetically and seems to have little regard for the gender of the human in which its offspring will gestate in an act of implicit pansexuality that 'is at once enticing and ghastly'.[11] The impregnation of a male and his subsequent feminisation lend itself to this corrupted matrix of sex and gender identity. According to Creed, '[v]iewing the horror film signifies a desire [...] for perverse pleasure (confronting sickening, horrific images/ being filled with terror/desire for the undifferentiated)', adding that 'such scenes satisfy a morbid desire to see as much as possible of the unimaginable, such as graphic horrifying images of a man giving birth to a monster'.[12] Much of Creed's Freudian readings of *Alien* overlap with Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's writing in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, specifically his sixth thesis that fear of the monster is really a kind of desire. Cohen writes that '[t]hrough the body of the monster fantasies of aggression, domination, and inversion are allowed safe expression in a clearly delimited and permanently liminal space'.[13] Specifically, 'monsters serve as secondary bodies through which the possibilities of other genders, other sexual practices, and other social customs can be explored'.[14] As *Alien* endures as one of the most popular sci-fi horror films, a Freudian reading might allow us to infer this as evident of audiences' continuous desire to watch and revel in the Xenomorph's deviancy within a delimited space of safe expression. Its horror is both repulsive and yet intoxicating in its taboo and overtly sexual imagery and themes.

The corruption of traditional gender roles occurs not only in the monstrous-femininity or hermaphroditic nature of the Xenomorph, but through various human, non-human, and biomechanical bodies within the film. It is worth noting that the only two crew members who survive the sexual, phallic attacks of the Xenomorph are Ash (Ian Holm), the genderless, asexual android, and Ripley, a strong and non-traditional female character who redefined the role of women in horror, thus implying the desirability of non-traditional gender identities.[15] For the most part, the other members of the Nostromo fall into designated roles for their gender and so perish at the hands of the Xenomorph. The deviance from desirable femininity and maternity are recurring motifs throughout *Alien*, from the parthenogenetic reproduction of the Xenomorph and the absent mother alien who first laid the ovomorphs (alien eggs), to the Nostromo's computer mainframe which the crew refer to as 'Mother' but which is programmed to protect only the Xenomorph and not the human crew in a perversion of traditional maternal feelings.[16] Furthermore, in the moments in which the heroine Ripley displays maternal qualities, it is towards the cat, a non-human life form, which disrupts perceived notions of maternity. Even in an establishing shot, the shape of the biomechanical, derelict ship in which the alien eggs are found is redolent of two outspread legs, and the entrance passages are distinctly vaginal, and can thus be considered a body which deviates from common gender expectations.[17] These sexually or gender deviant entities are the only beings that survive by the end of the film, and although the film's individual Xenomorph may have perished in space it is survived by the multitude of eggs seen earlier in the film — its non-normativeness ensures its future. On the other hand, the damsel-like Lambert and the male crewmembers who repeatedly ignore and undermine Ripley's 'strong objections' do not survive until the end.[18] Simply, their conformity does not save them, but rather ensures their demise.

While *Alien* can undeniably be read in a number of ways, by analysing its presentation of desirable and undesirable bodies with regards to feminism and psychoanalysis, it can be read as an indictment of the hypersexual heteropatriarchy. While much of the film's shock factor stems from what Creed refers to as the monstrous-feminine, its utilisation of body horror and H.R. Giger's timeless production design mean that audiences of all genders feel the visceral discomfort and fear which forces them to sympathise with women as victims of the sexual patriarchy. Its abjection of taboo sexual and gender identities made manifest within the Xenomorph also aligns with the Freudian idea that repressed desires manifest as fears, while the survival of sexually and gender deviant bodies as opposed to the demise of the conformist characters also implies the desirability of bodies which fall outside of the heteropatriarchal matrix of identity.

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Carys Richards English Literature

‘He has borrowed his authority from death’: An Exploration of the Connection between Death and the Narrative

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Charles Dickens has always been celebrated for his deaths. ’Little Nells’ from *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840), has become a byword for a sentimentalised and excessive death scene. Etchings, paintings and early films capture the dramatic moments his various characters are dispatched to the great beyond. Yet the simplification and sentimentalisation of these deaths in many cases misses the point. There is a fascinating relationship between death and the narrative which develops throughout his career. The striking contrasts and eerie similarities between the representations of death in *Bleak House* (1852)and *A Tale of Two Cities* (1860) exemplify this progression.[1] [2] *Bleak House* demonstrates a fear of death and an attempt to rationalise fatally self-destructive forces. By the time Dickens comes to write *A Tale of Two Cities*, death has become an accepted fact, even a celebrated one. This growing preoccupation with death can be seen through the way both narratives employ tropes, such as haunting and premonition, that would later become synonymous with British ‘weird fiction’, a term defined by Dr Michael Meeuwis as ’literature of the strange and amazing, whose authors frequently cite Dickens as an influence.’[3] Whereas in *Bleak House* these tropes seem to indicate a fear of death, in *A Tale of Two Cities* they represent an uneasy yet definite acceptance.

It is not the simple fact of death which preoccupies these stories. The characters are often driven by what would later be defined by Freud as ’the death drive’. This concept, first explored by Sabina Spielrein in her paper *Destruction as the Cause of Coming Into Being* (1912) and, subsequently developed by Freud in *Beyond The Pleasure Principal* (1920), proposes that there is an instinctual tension between Eros and Thanatos, the desire for life and love and sex, and a natural human desire to return to an inanimate state.[5] [6] It would be anachronistic to suggest that Dickens was consciously working in this psychological framework, but it is undeniable that the tension between life and death is a strong motivation behind his work. It is easy to track a chronological development in the narrative relationship with death as it progresses, or even matures, throughout his work. As it does, so does the tension which draws the protagonists either away from or towards their own ultimate fates.

Bleak House is a book about haunting. It is a narrative in which characters are doomed to repeat the actions of generations before them in the form of the cyclical and pointless court case which forms the tell-tale heart of the story. As Dickens says, ‘Jarndyce and Jarndyce still drags its dreary length before the Court, perennially hopeless’.[7] If a haunting is a shadow, or repetition of the past, it is easy to frame the case as a restless spirit, refusing to leave this earth long after its appointed time. John Jarndyce certainly seems to think so. The metaphorical ‘east wind’ (classically haunting) which springs up whenever he is displeased can be read as a symptom of the trauma he has gone through due to the case, the Growlery as an attempt to geographically control the ‘signs of misery’ left upon the house by Tom Jarndyce, who killed himself due to his obsession with the case. He is haunted by the death of his uncle, and it is such that this death is intrinsically tied to Chancery, so much so that it is, almost dismissively, mentioned in that first description of the case, ‘since old Tom Jarndyce blew his brains out at a coffee-house on Chancery Lane’.[8] Therefore, the metaphorical idea of the court case as a ghost is given a tangible grounding through its connection with a real death.

This symbolic ghost is not the only supernatural figure of the book. The tale of the Ghost’s Walk, told in chapter three, becomes a persistent reminder of the intergenerational trauma caused by the shame of pre-marital sex and the social ramifications of transgression. It reinforces the spiritual suggestion of Jarndyce and Jarndyce. Dickens loves his doubles, and the two stories of inherited responsibility make an apt pair. It is the story of an ancestor of the Dedlock family whose wife betrays him, leading to her own death. It tells that anytime footsteps are heard on the Ghost’s Walk shame will come to Chesney Wold. Dickens teases the reader by embracing the supernatural element ’"hither, child, towards my Lady’s pillow. I’m not sure it is dark enough yet but listen! Can you hear the sound upon the terrace, through the music, and the beat, and everything?"’.[9] The answer is affirmative, and Dickens never clarifies whether these ghostly footsteps are allegorical or supernatural in nature. An approaching entity is a well-worn trope of the ‘weird’ genre. The recurring refrain of M R James’s 1904 ghost story, *Oh Whistle and I’ll Come to You, My Lad*, is this: ‘Who is this who is coming?’[10] This question, unsettling not only due to the sense of the unknown but also to the strange syntax of the sentence, sums up the story of the Ghost’s Walk. Who do the footsteps, which will bring ruin to the house, belong to? Narratively this allusion to death and haunting reminds the reader that the threat of the past is beginning to overwhelm the present. A ghost is a part of the past which will not stay there, a constant reminder of grief. Lady Dedlock’s secret is, in this sense, a ghost. It will not stay buried and it drives her to her own grave. Both Esther and Lady Dedlock identify with the ghost, the intergenerational trauma of their separation bonding them to the narrative of persistent, haunting shame. The fact that their story is so closely identified with that of the Ghost Walk adds a sense of fear and urgency to the narrative, as the implicit ending of the tale is that one or both of them must meet the same fate as the original Lady of the house.

The ghost story is not the only aspect of the narrative which embraces "weird" tropes because what is haunting if not repetition? In his essay *The Storyteller: Reflections on the Work of Nikolai Leskov* (1936) Walter Benjamin says of Hebel's *Unexpected Reunion* 'death appears in it with the same regularity as the reaper does', and this could just as well apply to *Bleak House*, as there are eight major deaths scattered throughout the story.[11] The suicide of Tom Jarndyce before the narrative begins is followed by Nemo, Gridley, Krook, Joe, Tulkinghorn, Lady Dedlock and Richard all meeting various fates. On a structural level this can be cynically seen as an attempt to create cliff-hangers for an eager monthly audience. Tulkinghorn's murder, certainly, has a sensational thrill to it. Yet this repetition reiterates the inescapable 'weird' and fateful aspect of *Bleak House.* As we have already established, haunting is a form of repetition and through this constant return to scenes of death the novel itself is structurally haunted by the very fact of death. The critic Mark Fisher said that repetition is how humanity processes our trauma.[12] Dickens' fascination with death in *Bleak House*, its variations, its effects, is not isolated to this novel. Yet it stands out in his work as it seems that by revisiting the theme of death over and over Dickens is attempting to understand this great mystery. This fascination with ideas that would later come to define the 'weird fiction' sub-genre of horror is demonstrative of the unease with which *Bleak House* handles the prospect of death. The threat of untimely doom is explored through ghost stories and a constant return to the moment of death. Again, these tropes create urgency within the narrative, an overwhelming sense that the story is hurtling towards the ultimate moment of reckoning. A haunting implies an approaching presence (who is this who is coming?) and implicitly, approaching death.

A Tale of Two Cities starts with a resurrection. Jarvis Lorry is 'on his way to dig someone out a grave'.[13] It is a spectral image grounded by references to real historical fact on the first page. Dickens lists, immediately after establishing the date, several 'spiritual revelations' that took place in the 18th century. The references to the Cock Lane ghost and such 'matters spiritual', reinforce the supernatural element of these early chapters (and reflect Dickens personal interest in seances and spiritualism).[14] The sense of the supernatural is heightened as Lorry imagines 'variations of sunken cheek, cadaverous colour, emaciated hands and fingers' and a figure who 'with earth hanging about his face and hair...would suddenly fall away to dust'.[15] In this first chapter fear of the supernatural is represented in a very traditional way. It is grotesque and deeply unsettling. These strange, or 'weird', elements recur throughout the book much like they do in *Bleak House.* Yet unlike *Bleak House* the initial gothic elements are subverted when the 'recall to life' is successful and the London sections of the novel are moved to 'a quiet street corner not far from Soho'.[16] It is in this quiet street corner that *Tale of Two Cities'* strange ambivalence to haunting, to weirdness and to death, become most apparent.

The footsteps that haunt the characters of *Bleak House* reappear, though transmuted, in *A Tale of two Cities.* In the chapter 'Echoing Footsteps', a number of years pass in just a few pages. These years are marked in a peculiar way, 'Lucie sat in the still house in the tranquilly resounding corner, listening to the echoing footsteps of the years'.[17] The strangeness of these disembodied footsteps is barely remarked upon. They simply coexist with the tranquillity of the domestic space. It is a space which may, traditionally, be haunted due to the death of a child. Yet death slips between the pages, almost unnoticed. Lucie's child dies and it's accepted and processed within less than a page. This calm acceptance of death reiterates the ambivalent attitude towards the supernatural footsteps. Similar to the disembodied footsteps of *Bleak House*, this moment neatly fits into Fisher's definition of 'the eerie' as the lack of absence, an invasion of a space which should be empty.[18] But here the 'invasion' is subtle rather than violent. Even as they become threatening in what they imply (revolution in France), there is a sense of acceptance, or even ambivalence. The footsteps represent inevitable change, which fits in with the political reading of *Tale of Two Cities* as a narrative in which the Revolution leads to horror but is necessitated nonetheless. This political dimension may go some way to explaining *Tale of Two Cities'* accepting attitude towards death. It is Dickens' understanding of the French Revolution as an inevitable, almost justifiable, situation with a horrific outcome. Not only was Dickens obviously older at this point in his career than when he wrote *Bleak House*, but he was moving within a historical narrative space in which an actual massacre took place. It is not a world which can afford the same attention towards individual death that *Bleak House* could, because of the sheer mass destruction which is yet to come within the story.

Death is explored in both *Bleak House* and *Tale of Two Cities* through supernatural themes and physical experiences. Yet both novels also attempt to reckon with the psychology of death and, similar to the way the theme of haunting developed, or perhaps matured, as Dickens' career progressed, there is a remarkable shift in the representation of what would later be defined as the death drive between the two novels. As we have already established, *Bleak House* is a novel unable to escape death and while the majority of these deaths are thematically linked to Chancery, it is also striking how many of them are, if not suicidal, driven by a sort of self-enablement. The deaths of Gridley, Joe and Richard seem to form a triptych within the novel. Each is undertaking a Sisyphean task they have been unwillingly drawn into. Gridley and Richard fight impossible court cases as Joe attempts to find peace from the law. Each death is inescapable and seems to stem from pure exhaustion. They are not suicidal as such, but they all give up on life. 'I am worn out' claims Gridley, as Bucket attempts to rally him.[19] His death in George's shooting gallery is echoed by that of Joe, who's dying moments take place in the same bed as Gridley's, with the words 'it's time for me to go to that there berryin ground, sir'.[20] This shared acceptance of death leads to some of Dickens's most powerful moments such as Miss Flight's gut-wrenching cry of 'not without my blessing' and, of course, the famous 'Dead, your majesty...' speech by the third-person narrator, which rounds off chapter forty-seven.[22] The devastating nature of these moments show that at this point in his career Dickens struggles to accept the death drive as a natural progression of life. It is developed in these characters by sinister outside forces, a terrible outcome in an unfair society. The last of

these quasi-suicidal deaths, that of Richard, attempts to find peace and kindness in the act of passing, as Esther says he 'began the world. Not this world...the world that sets this to rights'.[23] Yet even here there is a brutality, a sense of injustice. Richard leaves behind a pregnant wife and dies on the brink of reconciliation with his pseudo-family. Dickens is still uncomfortable with death as a self-enabled concept. This discomfort is at its height with two more major deaths in the novel, those of Nemo and Lady Dedlock.

It is arguable that the narrative of *Bleak House* starts with a suicide. Certainly the 1982 BBC radio adaptation positioned the off-page death of Tom Jarndyce as the opening scene.[24] His death is what allows the protagonists of the novel to inhabit the titular Bleak House and it is his memory which is evoked over, and over as various characters succumb, and he comes to haunt the novel. By positioning suicide at the start of the narrative Dickens allows himself to explore the theme of suicide with his remaining characters without explicitly labelling them as suicidal. After Nemo's death the other characters discuss whether it was accidental. 'Do you think he did it on purpose?' asks Krook as they discover the opium by his bedside (Krook is another character who later succumbs, spectacularly, to addiction), and the question is returned to again and again.[25] Suicide is also implied in the death of Lady Dedlock, who chooses to walk through the rain to the graveside of her dead lover and leaves what is essentially a suicide note which reads 'I have no purpose but to die'.[26] Do they have to die to legitimise Esther's heritage? They are bound in death in a way they couldn't be in life, a bond which may even outweigh marriage, and which means Esther is no longer an illegitimate child of questionable heritage. Yet it also means she is the child of two suicides, so this motivation must only be hinted at. Dickens is beginning to question the idea of sacrifice as a necessary element of the narrative. Yet at this point in his career he still cannot fully accept the idea of the death drive as a key character motivation. This is exemplified by Esther's rejection of the impulse. Halfway through the narrative Esther catches smallpox, leading to a strange retrospective passage exploring her feverish state. She imagines a staircase, a typical metaphor for the state between life and death. She remembers 'in my weakness I was too calm to have any care for myself, and could have heard (or so I think now) that I was dying; with no other emotion than with a pitying love for those I left behind', eerily echoing the exhausted acceptance of Gridley before her and Joe and Richard after.[27] Yet she beats her illness and, essentially, chooses life and by allowing Esther to survive, to get married and procreate, Dickens seems to be celebrating Eros. She is the protagonist and manages to reject the draw towards death. By contrasting her illness and survival with the multiple other characters who do not have the strength to carry on, *Bleak House* represents defiance towards the vulgarity and perceived weakness of a suicidal urge. After all, when Dickens was writing these stories not only was an attempted suicide a punishable crime but also a sin.

The social context is what makes Dicken's exploration of the death drive and the balance between sacrifice and suicide in *A Tale of Two Cites* so remarkable. Lucie and Charles Darney arguably can be seen as representing Eros as they marry and have children. The strange prediction on the last page idealises a future in which they continue to love and, most importantly, have another child. Yet for them to achieve this ideal life, two other characters must succumb to death. The narrative of *A Tale of Two Cities* cannot reach a satisfactory conclusion without sacrifice, the ultimate acceptance of death. However, in contrast to *Bleak House*, the narrative conclusion is not focused on the 'choose life' characters but on a character who embraces the death drive. Madame Defarge and Sydney Carton are the most interesting, complex characters in the novel. Both live outside of the patriarchal and heteronormative ideals demonstrated by Lucie and Charles. That is not to say these characters necessarily offer a queer reading, but that they do not fulfil the basic function of such a society as neither have children. This is particularly striking in the case of Madame Defarge, for all appearances happily married for many years. Yet it is implied her need to wreak revenge on those who took her family away from her outweighs her desire to replace this family. Or, her desire to take life away outweighs her desire to create new life. This is exemplified by her final transgression, the desire to kill Little Lucie, and whatever unborn child that may still be conceived. This total absence of parental feeling, as opposed to, say, Mr Lorry, who doesn't have his own children but takes a paternal role within the narrative (Dickens never was a biological purist), is implicitly a symptom of a trauma too deep to ever be fixed. There is an implication that if one cannot create or nurture new life then one's own life lacks value. Certainly, both Madame Defarge and Sydney seem to hold their own in low regard, displaying reckless disregard for safety on multiple occasions.

It is no coincidence that the death of Madame Defarge hints at a self-destructive, if not suicidal, impulse. She may die in battle, but it is her own hand that pulls the trigger. Her relationship with death is a violent, overwhelming force which drives the narrative. Her positioning as a mastermind of the revolution and the ensuing reign of terror is the major antagonistic force after the early dispatching of the stand-in for the aristocracy, the Monsignor (another death brought on by the actions of the self). Yet she is an oddly sympathetic and compelling figure, particularly as her trauma and vulnerability comes to light. As she fights for vengeance for her family it is hard not to feel pity. She is driven by the need to see others die yet there is a startling lack of self-preservation. When her overwhelming desire for bloodshed is eventually turned in towards herself the question of blame offers an interesting psychological reading of the character. Yes, it absolves good English Miss Pross of blame, but by having the character die by her own hands Dickens, consciously or not, places her death in a dialogue with the similarly self-sacrificial death of Sydney Carton.

This brings us to Dickens' ultimate attempt to rationalise, understand, and finally possibly accept, the complex concept of human mortality. Sydney Carton is not a hero. He is a drunk. He lacks motivation. When he is first introduced he sits with his 'eyes to the ceiling', apparently disinterested as a man's life hangs in the balance before him.[28] When musing on a possible friendship with Darney he tells himself 'Why should you particularly like a man who resembles you? There is nothing in you you like'.[29] Sydney is essentially a suicidal character. Yet through framing his death as a heroic, Christ-like myrtadom, Dickens finally finds a way to justify

the death-seeking impulse that has haunted his characters for most of his career. This death references the fatalistic musings of Ralph Nickleby in *Nicholas Nickleby*, as Sydney wandering the streets of Paris, while beginning to formalise his plan, is eerily reminiscent of Ralph’s final journey through London.[30] It also chimes with the honourable intentions of poor Ham in *David Copperfield*, right down to the attempt to save his love rival.[31] The celebrated last lines of the novel, ‘It is a far, far greater thing I do now than I have ever done. It is a far, far greater rest I go to than I have ever known’, represents a culmination of Dickens’ career long fascination with what may drive a character to embrace death.[32] Sydney envisions for himself the ultimate peace. This is not to say *A Tale of Two Cities* is a celebration of death. The murder of Madame Defarge’s family and the joyful executions of the later part of the novel are framed as terrible, irredeemable events. The trauma of untimely death is, as ever in Dickens’ work, shown in its full horror. But through his attempts to understand what may drive a person to sacrifice, and though those last lines, he seems to finally reach a morally satisfying justification for what may drive a suicidal impulse. If one character embraces the death drive to allow another to embrace Eros a natural, or even heroic, balance can resume.

Death is the natural progression of life. Yet humanity fears it perhaps above all other things. Through art we revisit our fears over and over in an attempt to rationalise them. The evolution of the theme of death throughout Dickens’ career seems to have, in many ways, been driven by fear of death and psychological uncertainty on the part of the author himself. These preoccupations add urgency and pace to his narratives. The steady, encroaching footsteps that follow the character of *Bleak House* and *A Tale of Two Cities* echo the narrative beats of the plots, marching towards their approaching conclusions. Death and the narrative are intrinsically tied in the work of Dickens, sometimes as a triumphant defeat and sometimes as an erotic draw toward but always as a key motivations for his characters. It is not a static relationship, mutating and changing as Dickens matured both as a writer and a private being. There is a narrative the way the relationship itself progresses, from fear, towards ambivalence and, ultimately, acceptance.

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Olivia Coleman English Literature

Wulf and Eadwacer & *Deor*: A Translation with Commentary

SERAINA MARIA MANUELA EISELE, English Literature

WULF

For my people, it is as if someone offered them a gift
Will they kill him and his troop or welcome them with open arms?
There is a difference between us.

Wulf is on an island. I am on another

That island
is secure, surrounded by marsh. There are bloodthirsty men on that island

Will they kill him and this troop or welcome them with open arms?
There is a difference between us.

I've endured my Wulf's w i d e wanderings.

When it was rainy weather and I sat
apart
weeping. When the battle-bold wrapped me in his arms.
Painful pleasure!

Wulf, my Wulf, my hopes for you
made me sick, your seldom-comings,
the grief of my heart, not lack of food.

Can you hear, Eadwacer?
A wolf will carry our wretched whelp into the woods.

It can easily be
t a
o p
r a
n r
t

What is un-
completed.

The song of us two together.[1]

DEOR

Weland the blacksmith bore the pain.
The single-minded man suffered miseries,
sorrow and longing were his shadows,
Woes wintered in him weakened his wings.
Nithad hamstrung him tied his hands
supple sinew-bonds on the strong man.
That passed away, so may this!

For Beadohilde it was not her brother's death
that enslaved her spirit but her own situation:
The merciless murderer left her in misery.
Since she had realised that she was pregnant
thoughts about the future tormented her mind.
That passed away, so may this!

We have heard about Mathilde's moans
The affections of Geat became boundless
dark dreams deprived her of sleep
That passed away, so may this!

Theodric ruled for thirty winters
the Mærings' fort his fame was well known.
That passed away, so may this!

We have learned of Eormanric,
a savage sovereign scared people widely
in the kingdom of the Goths. That was a grim king!
Many a man sat shackled in sorrow,
in expectation of woe, wished often
that the kingdom would be overcome.
That passed away, so may this!

A man sits in despair deprived of joy
tenebrous thoughts thicken in his mind
the sorrow of his soul seems endless
Then he may consider that throughout this world
the wise creator frequently changes fates
To many men mercy is shown,
fame and fortune famine and fear to others.

The following of myself I want to say:
I was a scop servant of the Heodenings,
dear to my lord. Deor was my name.
For years I possessed a prestigious position,
loyal to my lord until the lucky Heorrenda,
a song-skilled man settled on the land
that my protector previously had granted me.
That passed away, so may this![2]

CRITICAL COMMENTARY

In this commentary, I will discuss the challenges I encountered in translating the two Old English poems *Wulf and Eadwacer* and *Deor*. Guided by Craig Williamson's advice that a good translator 'needs to carry home as much of the beautiful old wood as possible', but also acknowledging that differences in language and culture require other forms of expressions, I tried to find a balance between faithful translation and creative liberty.[3] However, each of the poems posed its own difficulties and individualised approaches were necessary to create a translation accessible to modern readers. Although critics have often argued that there is a close connection between *Wulf and Eadwacer* and *Deor* – the two poems are linked by the use of refrain and are placed alongside each other in the Exeter Book – for my part, I tried to contrast them. This decision resulted from a close reading and intense engagement with the critical literature, which made me aware of the fundamental differences between the two poems. For example, although both texts are often perceived as enigmatic, in each case different forces seem to cause this effect. While *Wulf and Eadwacer* is genuinely enigmatic in its design and plays with ambiguity, *Deor* only has this effect on modern readers and was, in fact, originally intended to be allusive. Similarly, the shared thematic focus on suffering and loss can be placed in contrast by highlighting the fact that in *Wulf and Eadwacer* pain is depicted as endless, whereas in *Deor* its transitoriness is emphasised. In my translation, I aimed to capture these differences and thus chose different approaches for each of the poems.

In the case of *Wulf and Eadwacer*, it was difficult to find an appropriate verse form. The original is, unusually for Anglo-Saxon poetry, barely bound together by alliteration. Consequently, I initially considered translating the poem into prose. However, after reading the prose translation by Bradley, I felt that much of the poem's tone was lost, so I opted for free verse instead.[4] This decision allowed me to graphically highlight the poem's central themes of isolation and loss. For example, I often separated individual lines – such as 'Wulf is on an island. I am on another' – or even individual words – such as 'apart' – in order to accentuate the distance between the speaker and Wulf.[5] Moreover, I attempted to visualise the sufferings of exile by means of an envelope – 'that island [...] that island' – creating a spatial boundary on the page. Undoubtedly, the most challenging part of visually underlining the thematic elements came at the end of the poem. I aimed to capture as many aspects of this dense passage as possible through the creative arrangement of the words 'torn apart'. On the one hand, I hoped that the chosen form would remind the reader of a gaping wound, that it would highlight the speaker's pain and suffering, while simultaneously adding an animalistic layer by alluding to a wolf that violently tears its prey apart. On the other hand, the form also seems similar to that of a heart, which is intended to emphasise the emotional bond between the separated couple. Although Old English poems are not visually structured in this way in the original manuscripts, I believe that introducing this additional layer was justified as a means of compensating for the now lost oral layer that would have been present in the Anglo-Saxon tradition when the poems were recited aloud. However, I was also careful to preserve some Old English characteristics, in order not to domesticate the poem too much. For example, I translated 'seldcymas' literally as 'seldom-comings', although a modern reader might find it difficult to grasp the meaning of this litotes and 'absence' might have been easier to understand.[6]

A central concern of my translation was to maintain the ambiguity inherent in the original. This was a difficult task, since many Old English words encompass a wider semantic field than their modern English equivalents. Therefore, it was not always possible to find a suitable equivalent, capable of reflecting the different connotations of the original word. For example, the expression 'lac' (1) in the first line of the poem can mean 'gift', 'offering' or 'sacrifice'. Baker fails to appreciate this ambiguity, arguing that only the first reading seems plausible, since otherwise a 'more ceremonious verb' than gifan would have followed.[7] However, I endeavoured to preserve, at least in part, the possibility of multiple meanings. Although I translated 'lac' (1) as 'gift', I chose to combine it with the verb 'offer'. This adds a layer of uncanniness, since 'offer' alludes to 'offering' and is usually not used in combination with the noun 'gift'. A similar challenge was posed by the translation of 'aþecgan' (2). This Old English verb encompasses meanings as diverse as 'receive', 'destroy' or 'consume as food', with interpretations of it therefore ranging from welcoming to killing. Inspired by Williamson's translation – 'Will they take him into the tribe and let him thrive or think him a threat?' – I decided to embrace this ambiguity by explicitly mentioning both options.[8] I thus ended up with: 'Will they kill him and his troop or welcome him with open arms?'. In this translation, even the second part of the question supports a more sombre reading, since 'arms' can mean either 'more than one arm' or 'weapons'.

Similarly, I also wished to maintain the ambiguity regarding the characters. Although the most popular reading suggests that there are four characters in the poem (the speaker, her lover, her husband and a child), no clear textual evidence for this an interpretation can be found. In fact, some critics have argued that Eadwacer is not a proper name at all, but rather an epithet for the speaker's lover – the guardian of her happiness – and that Wulf and Eadwacer are thus the same person. According to Greenfield, for example, the passage in which the speaker is embraced by the 'battle-bold' depicts a scene in which Wulf has escaped from his island to visit his beloved.[9] In order to acknowledge this possibility, I decided to change the title of the poem. Old English poems, as originally written, have no title, and I think that an intervention of this kind by a modern editor/translator must be carefully thought through. I believe that naming both characters in the title biases the reader towards the first reading, according to which Wulf and Eadwacer are different people. However, my choice to entitle the poem simply 'Wulf' allows for both possibilities. Even if Eadwacer is indeed the speaker's husband, it would be plausible for him not to appear in the title, as the poem focuses on the separation of the speaker from Wulf.

Another objective of my translation was to convey the emotional intensity and the overwhelming hopelessness of the poem. To this end, I occasionally dispense with a literal translation and relied instead on my own creativity. For example, I perceived the line 'wæs

me wyn to þon, wæs me hwæþre eac lað' (12) as very powerful, due to the speaker's conflicting emotions. However, a straightforward translation, such as Sampson's attempt – 'That brought me joy but also pain' – seemed to me to insufficiently convey the emotional tension.[10] I therefore decided to coin the oxymoron 'painful pleasure', which brings the two emotions close together and thereby emphasises their opposition, while also connecting them through alliteration. Similarly, I allowed myself a few interventions to capture the poem's pessimistic tone. Although the poem *Deor*, which I will discuss in the next paragraph, is also centred on pain and loss, there is always the consolation of transience, which brings all miseries to an end. In *Wulf and Eadwacer*, however, the situation is one of hopelessness and suffering seems endless. Since this perception significantly influences the tone of the poem, I wished to emphasise the unchangeability of the speaker's fate on the linguistic level as well. In order to convey this passivity, I was generally careful to use as few verbs as possible and, when I had no choice, to use a stative version. For example, I translated the verb 'dogode' (9) as 'endured', although other options, such as 'suffered', 'followed' and 'trailed', have been suggested by critics. However, since the meaning of the verb is generally obscure, I think my choice is justified and not even that far removed from the proposed translation 'suffered'. Another example is my translation of 'murnende mōd' (15). Although the literal translation would require a gerundive – 'grieving heart' – I chose to transform it into a noun and translated as 'the grief of my heart'. In the case of the poem *Deor*, I set other priorities, therefore adopting a quite different approach for my translation. In contrast to *Wulf and Eadwacer*, I considered it essential to preserve the form of the original. As is typical for Anglo-Saxon conventions, *Deor* is written in an alliterative, strong-stress pattern. Every line of the poem is divided into two half-lines, each of which contains two stresses. The third stress in a line always alliterates with the first or second stress or both, but usually not with the fourth stress. An example from my translation which illustrates this traditional alliterative verse form can be found in line 16, in which the second and third stress alliterate: 'ten-e-brous thoughts / thick-en in his mind' (16) (stress underlined, alliteration in bold). However, it was not possible to consistently maintain this strict form. I was careful not to sacrifice the meaning for the sake of alliteration, allowing myself several transgressions. For example, I often alliterated with the fourth stress, such as in line 9, in which the first and second stress do not alliterate with the third stress, but rather with the fourth one: 'that en-slaved her spirit / but her own sit-u-a-tion' (9). In some cases, when even an alliteration of this sort seemed impossible, I followed Williamson's example of cross-line alliteration in order to tighten the verses.[11] For example, in line 31 there is no alliteration, but the word 'consider' (31) alliterates with 'creator' (32) and 'changes' (32) in the following line. Although it was sometimes challenging to work within the restrictions of an alliterative verse scheme, it also created unique possibilities to highlight central ideas, a point upon which I will expand in the following paragraphs.

As indicated in the introduction, *Deor* is often perceived to be enigmatic. However, a critical engagement with the secondary literature convinced me that the poem is, in fact, designed to be allusive, rather than enigmatic. As Conreden puts it, each stanza has 'a large "balloon" allusion floating at some distance from the poem', which guides the reader.[12] In fact, scholars' efforts have made it possible to identify some of the mysterious names as referring to characters from Germanic legends. However, it can be assumed that these heroic figures were better known to a contemporary Anglo-Saxon audience than they are to the modern reader. Consequently, the poem can indeed come across as enigmatic, even if this was presumably not the original intention. With this in mind, I attempted, wherever possible, to reinforce the allusions and thus to facilitate the identification of the referents for a modern reader. For example, since critics widely agree that the character mentioned in the first stanza is Weland the Smith, I tried to include some additional references to the legend. This can be illustrated by my translation of the first half-line, in which I preferred to state the hero's profession, instead of engaging with the contextually unclear meaning of the word 'wurman'.[13] Moreover, I decided not to translate the half-line 'wean oft onfond' (4) literally as 'misfortunes often experienced', but instead used the metaphor 'weakened his wings' (4), which alludes to Weland's later escape using a winged cloak. Similarly, I also tried to expand on the 'balloon allusion' for Beadohilde and allowed myself to insert the line 'The merciless murderer / left her in misery' (10). This additional information alludes to Weland and helps the reader to draw a connection between the fates of stanzas one and two. Overall, I hope that these minor adaptions have strengthened the allusive tone of my translation and thus helped to reduce the distance to the original text.

Another central theme of the poem is how fate can turn around and how all suffering comes to an end. This idea is emphasised by the refrain, which I translated with 'That passed away / so may this' (7). In this sense, *Deor* stands in stark contrast to *Wulf and Eadwacer*, insofar as it highlights the transitory nature of pain. Although this might seem like a consolation at first glance, a darker reading is also possible: not only evil can pass away, but good too. In fact, Mandel argues that the central claim of *Deor* is not that all misfortune will come to an end, but rather that everything is transitory and under the control of God, who 'allows to some a portion of honour and to others a portion of woe'.[14] This opposition between fortune and misfortune seemed central to me and I thus tried to emphasise it in my translation. For example, I inserted the adjective 'lucky' (39) into line 39 to highlight God's favourable intention towards Heorrenda. Not only did this adjustment strengthen Heorrenda's position, but it also enabled me to fulfil the metrical requirements, since the inserted word alliterates with 'loyal' (39) and 'lord' (39). Moreover, I was careful with my translation of line 28, in which Deor is not only described as 'sorgcearig' (28) ('sorrowing'), but also as 'sælum bidæled' (28) ('cut off from joy'). Although some translators have transformed the latter expression more loosely – such as Heaney, who translates it as 'daunted in spirit' – for my part, I found it essential to preserve the explicit opposition between sorrow and joy present in the original.[15] I only allowed myself to replace 'sorrow' by 'despair' (28), in order to connect the two emotions through alliteration, but translated the rest of the line literally: 'A man sits in despair / deprived of joy' (28).

In this commentary, I have shared my thoughts on possible interpretations of the poems W*ulf and Eadwacer* and *Deor* and, on this basis, explained the choices made in my translation. In this way, I hope to have shown that there is no universally valid approach to translation, but that each poem should be considered individually. Undoubtedly, some of my choices could be criticised for deviating too greatly from the original text, such as my decision to translate *Wulf and Eadwacer* into free verse. However, I think that such adaptions have enriched my translation and potentially mimic the original tone of the poem better than a literal translation would have done. As Williamsons states, a good translation should not only be 'true to the original form' but also 'beautiful in its own right'.[16] In this sense, I hope that my rewriting of the poems has produced exactly that: a work of art that is, at its core, true to the original.

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Seraina Maria Manuela Eisele English Literature

Escaping America: The Navigation of the American Landscape in *Thelma and Louise* and *Queen & Slim*

ELLA PORTER, American Studies

The road movie, as identified by Neil Archer, is a genre that is not only 'synonymous with American cinema [...] but to some extent defines "America" itself.'[1] In this particular position of being both produced by and generative of American culture, the road movie offers a point from which American identity can be measured. With rich visual displays of the intersections of geography, politics, psychology and an excess of other tensions, each text sanctions a unique vision of American culture framed, crucially, in terms of its relationship with the landscape.

In its continental vastness and geographic variety, the American landscape seems to guarantee satisfaction of that explicitly American idea of escape. On these ongoing roads, the typically white, male, heterosexual protagonist of the road movie has found a space in which to flee from his domestic duties, and as Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark view it, an 'increasing hospitality [...] to the marginalised and alienated' has been imagined here too following the release of *Thelma and Louise*.[2] However, in this observation, there is the failure to recognise the inability of that landscape to entertain such escapist fantasies when the trivial anxieties of masculine domestic boredom is no longer. When escape becomes a question of survival, as depicted in both *Thelma and Louise* (1991) and *Queen & Slim* (2019), the American landscape is repositioned as a place to escape from rather than into. From here, escape must be located elsewhere, and in both texts, a re-angling takes place as both plot and camera turn away from that limited anchoring of the road towards a more aerial position from which to observe and construct an American identity. 'The American landscape makes sense from the air',[3] says Denis Cosgrove. Drawing from this position of clarity and the strikingly political nature of 'humanity's conquest of the air',[4] Cosgrove points to the sky as a new perspective – a unique space of reflection for the American individual. In this neutral place of temporal and spatial suspension, 'we are', for once, 'not tied irrevocably to earth and water but are able to escape to the stars, even if temporarily'.[5] It is a position sought out in *Thelma and Louise* and *Queen & Slim*, as both texts recognise the potential that this alternate space of removal and reflection offers. When the road denies to these characters what it has traditionally offered to its white male protagonists, the American ideal of freedom configured in the paradox of escape, must be reimagined from a new height.

From the opening credits of *Thelma and Louise*, the American landscape is granted immediate significance. In a wide panning shot, the immense vastness and undisturbed beauty of the landscape is announced. The emptiness of this opening shot seems to confirm the landscape's position as blank space for identity to be developed

Fig. 1. *Thelma and Louise (1991)*

in and written on, an assertion echoed in the gradual colouring of the black and white frame to signal this creative potential. However, as the camera slowly tilts away from the road, and towards the sky, this flood of colour indicates something else entirely as the film begins to state a need for repositioning. (See Figure 1).[6] In this desire for a new perspective, the film also argues for a new means of getting there through its consistent stationing of the car and the road inside a masculine domain. From a more benign alignment with the oppressive Darryl as regional manager of a car sales company, to the violent image of Harlan's body slumped against an Arkansas numberplate, the car is firmly marked as a symbol of the very thing Thelma and Louise are running from. The car cannot offer relief from American patriarchy, as it is instead revealed to perpetuate it.

Disillusioned with this masculine space of the car – an idea that reaches its climax in the destruction of the tank truck, the film begins to insist on another mode of transport as more appropriate escape route. A redirection towards the aerial for identification is first visualised using maps, of which Louise explicitly classifies as a means of 'figuring out what to do'. Maps continue to crop up in the women's visual field, appearing even on the walls of their motel room, until Louise finally concludes to exit the landscape entirely. As she consults the aerial potential of the map, Louise proposes her plan to escape to Mexico. The camera responds by confirming the hostility of their current landscape in a series of cutback shots of an

Fig. 2. *Thelma and Louise* (1991)

Fig. 3. *Thelma and Louise* (1991)

approaching train that consumes both the audio and visual fields with its blaring horn and oppressive domination of the frame. In these shots, the land and the aerial are placed in a competition that parallels the opposition that Thelma and Louise experience with the landscape they inhabit. The plane is the first physical manifestation of this aerial dream. As it enters the film, the camera's handling of it serves to further confirm this position as the suitable adaptation for Thelma and Louise's escapist American fantasy. The plane's descent into a shot of an open sky is kept central, relegating the increasingly secondary position of the car to the background. However, rather than mirroring the oppressive imposition of the train, the plane arrives as the soundscape is filled with Thelma and Louise's carefree singing and is welcomed as a source of joy by the women when they wave as it passes by. The film then cuts to its first semi-aerial shot as viewed from this new omniscient height that the plane affords. As the camera moves with a sweeping fluidity, it creates a direct contrast to the straight lines of the landscape below. (See Figure 2). This linearity of the road, as Cosgrove reminds, is a symptom of the patriarchal landscape that Thelma and Louise look to leave behind. The 'rational division of land into rectangular states, townships, and sections', introduced by Thomas Jefferson with the intention 'to create a new and more perfect society' becomes a translation of the capitalist, patriarchal requirements of that landscape.[7] The air is confirmed as a position of power, both in its observational height and its ability to cut through this masculine shaping of the landscape.

However, in the final chase scene, this aerial position that has so far been filled with hope and opportunity, is denied as a point of sanctuary. As a police helicopter envelopes the aerial landscape in a series of ascending and descending shots, and rows of police cars are framed powerfully in overhead view, the air is revealed to be just as limiting as the road, so long as it exists in these strictly American terms. However, when physical escape is denied, asymbolic escape arrives in the women's decision to 'keep going' off the side of the Grand Canyon. In this, they extend the linear boundaries of the American road into that infinite space of the sky, and convert the so-far confining, masculine image of the car into an aerial vehicle. In finally vacating the landscape in this way, Thelma and Louise mark the road as redundant in their refusal to stay rooted to it any longer. The camera answers with gratifying slow-motion angles of the aerial conversion, and finally rewards by suspending Thelma and Louise in a freeze frame, consolidating the pair in the viewer's lasting image as finally escaping into the air. (See Figure 3). An achievement of American identity is then realised, conversely, as Thelma and Louise embody the American desire to shape the landscape for the individual's own purpose, rather than simply be shaped by it.

When Queen's uncle Earl remarks – 'Well, if it isn't the Black Bonnie and Clyde', Melina Matsoukas's *Queen & Slim* is consciously placed inside the American road movie tradition, whilst simultaneously centring its pivotal point of divergence. Race, and its relevance in both navigating the American landscape and orienting oneself within American cultural tradition, is wilfully foregrounded.

In a landscape in which police violence is a leading cause of death for Black men, the road is immediately asserted as unsafe terrain for Queen and Slim. From the opening scene, in which we witness Slim pinned down by an officer on the road itself, this space is plainly denied as an image of freedom. It is in the film's first aerial shot, as it exercises the same potential for stark reflection that Cosgrove notes, that the reality of the road as truly inhospitable is revealed. (See Figure 4).[8] Positioning this as a site of empirical violence rather than utopic daydream, the birds-eye view provides both the clinical detachment to observe this, and at the same time looks to privilege this perspective for the remainder of the film. As both the car, the road, and the wider American landscape are continually refused as spaces of freedom, the film continues to look to this aerial height to not only facilitate escape, but to ensure survival.

As the car is confirmed as a site of isolation and separation through the audio-visual motif of Queen and Slim's voices being heard inside the car whilst the camera remains at an external distance, the film moves to investigate more rewarding modes of transportation. In the scene in which the pair encounter the horse field, the film engages specifically with the politics and potential of height when Queen insists, 'Nothing scares a white man more than seeing a Black man on a horse. [...] 'Cause they have to look up at him'. Although not directly panoramic, this increased height is a repositioning towards the aerial that offers a specific interaction with the landscape outside of the limitations of the road and the isolating, cold, blue light present in the scenes of urban America. Examining this relationship between the natural landscape and race, Christine Gerhardt notes that 'to become a free American in the

Fig. 4. *Queen & Slim* (2019)

Fig. 5. *Queen & Slim* (2019)

American cultural context, there is no other option: the protagonist must follow the dominant white patterns of self-creation and dominate the wilderness.'[9] To survive in this American landscape, freedom must first be relocated outside of the white patriarchal domain, so as Queen runs away from the car towards the horse as the embodiment of this desired position of height and movement, the American concept of escape is redefined in terms of what the car has failed to fulfil. However, as the fence divides the frame diagonally with the car notably on Queen and Slim's half of the frame and the horse on the other, we are subtly reminded of the reality of separation and limitation imprinted on the landscape. (See Figure 5). In another environment, this connection might offer the freedom they desire, but as the screen divides, and is then further disrupted by a distinct voice of the American landscape – that of cursing and threats about property, Queen and Slim are forced to return to the confinement of the car.

However, the film cannot evade the necessity for escape and at this point the plane, with its aerial possibilities, enters the film. As *Thelma and Louise* asserts the failure of the car in its final destruction, a similar redundancy is signalled when Queen and Slim leave their car for the last time in favour of the plane, and a symbolic match-cut proceeds to show an abandoned truck, entirely rusted over, signifying the death of the car. In its place, the plane emerges in its dreamlike potential and is first seen from inside the car. As this dichotomy between internal and external, between entrapment and freedom is established, the fulfilment of the American promise of escape seems increasingly likely. However, in this composition, the camera also paints escape as a distinctly external feature, something viewed at a distance but never quite within reach. When Queen and Slim approach the plane, the police corner them from behind and the frame depicts the permanence of their position in a chilling wide shot that stages this reality in stoic clarity. (See Figure 7). As a police helicopter arrives almost tauntingly then quits the shot, the aerial position and the freedom it could have afforded is placed in direct contrast to the immobilisation that Queen and Slim experience in the current landscape. And in their deaths, that occur on the tarmac of the flight path, Queen and Slim are forever restricted not only to the American landscape, but to their space on the road.

The road movie recognises that for the American individual, the landscape they inhabit will always inspire, by nature of its history and evolving cultural state, a need for escape. To the white American male, that escapist impulse might be easily satiated by a temporary interruption to the monotony of his domestic, heterosexual, financially determined routine by getting into a car and experiencing the isolation and variation that the road has to offer. However, to those that are not merely bored by the landscape they operate in but are actively oppressed by and fleeing from the spaces that surround them, the fulfilment of American escapism proves less simple. In both *Thelma and Louise* and *Queen & Slim*, escape is expatriated to the supposed non-American space of the air. As the road movie is redirected away from the horizontal continuity of the road towards this more hopeful vertical trajectory, a criticism of both the limitations of that landscape appears, as well as a warning of the perpetual status of it. Cosgrove's 'escape to the stars' holds true as he stresses the temporary nature of this position, as even the sky is shown to be in the power of this inescapable American domain.

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Ella Porter American Studies

Spectralities of the Medieval in Early Modern Literature

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These three early modern texts: 'The Jest of Dan Hew', Speght's *The workes of our ancient and learned English Poet, Geffrey Chaucer, newly printed*, and Fletcher and Shakespeare's *Two Noble Kinsmen*, circulate remnants of the Middle Ages to self-consciously construct the early modern period. Cultural work produces a spirit of each age and historical time which constructs a rupture between these two periods. Nonetheless, models of continuity suggest that elements of the middle ages persisted in the early modern present.[1] If the past is not dead then the work of mourning cannot proceed, for 'reality testing' fails to prove its passing.[2] These three texts therefore perform the work of melancholia staging 'conflicts of ambivalence' which seek to disavow the presence of the past, 'devaluing, disparaging and... even killing it', allowing the early modern period to 'enjoy the satisfaction of acknowledging itself to be the better of the two'.[3] However, each text remains haunted by that which it cannot kill – the spectral remains of the lively past. As Bernard Stiegler noted in conversation with Derrida, '*[e]verything we are saying about spectrality is tied to the question of inheritance – they are in fact the same question*'.[4] Thus, each attempt to conjure an essential (*homogenous*) spirit through which to define the early modern's inheritance carries with it the visible invisible presence of the heterogenous past that cannot be entirely regulated.

All three texts remain haunted by the spectral presence of a past they cannot mourn or kill: 'The Jest of Dane Hew's' circulation of a monk's corpse works to exorcize a corrupt spirit of the Catholic past, while Speght's dissemination of Chaucer's corpus conjures a spirit of Chaucer, as proto-modern and quintessentially English, affirming the inheritance and spirit of the 'Renaissance' age. Problematising inheritance, Fletcher and Shakespeare's ambivalent circulation of Chaucer's corpus and bones foregrounds the melancholic ambivalence which characterises each textual attempt to divide the two periods.

Central to 'The Jest of Dane Hew' is the recognition that to bury a past which persists in the present necessitates the production of a body to mourn. 'The Jest' produces the body of a 'lusty' monk who embodies the corrupt spirit of the "dark ages"; Dane Hew's transgressive desire for his neighbour's wife breaks the Christian code he supposedly represents.[5] The humour of 'The Jest' is located in the repeated killing of this deviant body and laughing 'at the Middle Ages' works to produce that period.[6] The opening lines set the stage for this work: 'IN olde time there was in Lecester town | An Abbay of Munks of great renown' (ll. 1-2). The archaism 'IN olde time' pushes the poem's action back in time, whilst the past tense, 'was', brings temporal closure to the poem's action before it has even started. Intensifying this is the opening couplet's temporal and spatial focus, which produces a different chronotopic world centred around 'an Abbay'. The rhyme ties 'town' to 'renown', establishing a "superstitious" community bound by the false valuations of the dark 'times [of] greatest ignorance'.[7] However, Leicester Abbey was dissolved and demolished in 1538, only two decades before 'The Jest' was printed.[8] Hence, post-reformation, this Leicester appears as a spectral community – conjured not from unfathomable 'obscurity', but wrought from 'a play of traces' of living memory and contemporary ruins, akin to the stage of melancholic conflicts of ambivalence.[9] The desire to kill off the past is what conjures these spectres in 'The Jest'.

The circulation of Dane Hew's corpse works to produce a corrupt body politic of Catholic past, thereby demarking its different *zeitgeist* (spirit) and demarking a rupture from the reformed present. Whilst, as David Matthews argues, '[t]he energy that drives the jest comes from the monk' it is a corrupt social economy which keeps the passive corpse in circulation.[10] This can be seen in the terms of the monk's deal with the Taylor's wife; his desire to 'haue' pleasure and her desire for a 'rewarde' are repeated across the poem, generating his following deaths (l. 26; l. 34). Accordingly, the Taylor's wife's desire to 'haue' twenty nobles and the Taylor's desire not to 'haue doon it in vain' instigate the first circulation of the corpse, whilst the Abbot's man's desire for the 'rewarde' of '1. shilling' generates the corpse's second movement (l. 77; 108; 166). However, the system of exchange disintegrates across the poem; the Taylor transfers the corpse for a second time by stealing the thieves' stolen bacon, thus becoming a thief himself.[11] The deaths of Dane Hew may be read as literalised conflicts of ambivalence; as promised by the titular 'Jest', these slayings are comedic, however, whilst the reader laughs, the characters respond to Dane Hew's corpse with grim horror, 'cry[ing]' out with fear (l. 247; 264). 'The Jest' hereby attempts to destroy the remnants of the Catholic past and enshrine the present's 'superiority'.[12]

Seeking to exorcize the spectral remains of the Catholic past and resolve the melancholic battle of ambivalence, 'The Jest' ends with the formation of new social bonds. The Miller's Wife instigates 'a generic shift into parodic romance', bringing the circulation of the corpse to a closure by mounting the monk on a "lusty" horse which chases the Abbott's mare.[13] With the 'long pole' in his hand, bestial desire carries the phallic monk forth to a final contrapasso death (l. 257). Here, the parodic excess mocks the dead's impotency. Similarly, the Abbot is emasculated; describing him as 'almost out of his minde for feare' positions him as the damsel in distress, disempowering the central figure of the Catholic Church (l. 317). The Abbot's men perform a violent exorcism: 'With Clubs and staues many one |They cast him to the earth anone' (ll. 325-6). The violently forged homosocial bonds — of *real* men with *real* clubs — replace the corrupt economy of exchange, finally bringing the wandering corpse to rest.

Duffy argues that the Reformation's attack on the Catholic cult of the dead was 'an act of exorcism, to limit the claims of the past, and the people of the past, on the people of the present'.[14] The violent comedy of beating a dead corpse repeats this work; Derrida writes that 'exorcism consists in repeating in the mode of an incantation that the dead man is really dead'. 'The Jest', from its title to its refrain that Dane Hew was 'slain', declares the death of the Catholic past 'in order to put [it] to death'.[15]

However, this violent mourning produces spectrality; 'the Jest' remains haunted by the continued vitality of the past which it so desperately seeks to deny. As Matthews writes, the Middle Ages 'is a past at which the text wants to laugh but the joke is premised on the possibility that the past might never truly die'.[16] Although 'The Jest' finally buries an embodied corpse of the past, the final lines are marked by the presence of the spectral remains of Dane Hew: 'thus was he once hanged and foure times slain | And buried at the last as it was best | I pray God send vs all good rest' (ll. 328-330). Connecting 'best' and 'rest' through rhyme denotes the necessity of the past dying to allow for a peaceful present. However, this 'rest' uneasily recalls the haunted sleep of the Taylor and his wife, whose fear ('sore afraid') conjured the spectral return of the monk (ll. 184-5). The prayer, aimed at the same 'God' invoked by the corrupt Abbot, causes the absolute difference between the ages of "dark" and "light" to become uncertain (l. 154). The text remains haunted by that which it seeks to repress– 'an anxiety about the persistence and vitality of the forms of traditional religion'.[17] This anxiety is symbolised by the wandering corpse of Dane Hew, and reflected in the determination with which 'The Jest' seeks to kill him.

Whilst 'The Jest' produces a body with which to bury the past, Thomas Speght's 1598 edition of Chaucer's works circulates the poet's corpus to conjure a spirit of Chaucer which enshrines the spirit of the present. As Tim Machan argues, '[t]he Chaucer constructed by Speght's unique prefatory material is distinctly a member of the English Renaissance who [. . .] also serves certain nationalistic purposes'.[18] This marks the collection's title: 'The workes of our ancient and learned English Poet, Geffrey Chaucer, newly printed'.[19] Speght fashions a collective identity around 'our' collective cultural inheritance. The values of 'ancient and learned' are connected, marking Chaucer as embodying the spirit of classical antiquity.[20] This produces a strange temporality wherein the two-hundred-and-six years between Chaucer's death and the printing of Speght's collection expands: the corpus of Chaucer is rescued from the 'dark' times of the near Catholic past by pushing it back into the 'light' of antiquity. This is compounded by the classicism of the decorative frontispiece and the editorial apparatus which 'are a direct imitation of editorial practice with classical writers', never before applied to a vernacular Middle English poet.[21] In reproducing Chaucer's corpus, Speght affirms the spirit of "restoration" through which the early modern period self-consciously constructed itself.[22]

Despite this version of Chaucer being akin to the classical writers, as Machan argues, he is 'above all quintessentially English', suggesting that Speght's canonisation seeks to conjure the spirit of Englishness.[23] Speght's discussion of 'His Bookes' expands the production of an inheritance of a reforming spirit of English poetry. Here, Chaucer is rendered as a proto-modern, driven by the desire to reform literature: 'Chaucer had always an earnest desire to enrich beauitie our English tongue, which in those daies was [. . .] barren and this he did following the example of *Dantes* and *Petrarch* [. . .] And England in this respect is much beholden to him'. Chaucer's presence is brought forth into the collective present of an England which is 'beholden to him'.[24] Derrida writes that 'an inheritance is never gathered together, it is never one with itself. Its presumed unity, if there is one, can consist only in the injunction to reaffirm by choosing'.[25] The choice made and recirculated here is the spirit of a reforming Englishness which is equal to that of the continent, an inheritance which affirms Elizabethan national identity. Mourning the cultural loss of the 'English Poet' conjures his absent presence, affirming the inherited spirit of the present. However, as Machan writes, '[the] recognition of Chaucer's preeminent status among poets is accompanied by anxiety over his origins in the Middle Ages'.[26] By constructing Chaucer as both a classical and proto-modern poet, Speght attempts to bury this anxiety. This reveals that a melancholic ambivalence lies beneath the early-modern reception of the Catholic poet.

Although Speght's edition seeks to bring Chaucer's textual body into the present, the "Renaissance" spirit also depended on the temporal difference and division between the early modern and Middle Ages. This is emphasised by the final words of the title — 'newly printed' — wherein new technology produces a temporal division between 'new' and 'ancient'. This difference is inscribed in the index of the frontispiece where Chaucer's — 'His' — presence is displaced by the agentic modern editor; each sentence ends in an active verb operating over the passive corpus: 'shewed', 'collected', 'gathered', 'explaned', 'declared', 'opened' and, finally, 'printed'. Chaucer's work being threatened with 'decais by injurie of time' draws a connection between the Poet's body and textual body; the decay of the corpse threatens to spread to corpus.[27] Emphasising this is Speght's addition of the glossary, which inscribes textual decay into Chaucer's works. However, as a palimpsest, print 'kept a layered 'medieval' past present', collapsing the chronology which Speght seeks to construct by affirming the continued vitality of the past.[28] Speght's conjuration of Chaucer's corpus produces spectres that cannot be controlled.

The inheritance Speght conjures remains haunted by *other* spectres. If 'mourning [. . .] consists always in attempting to ontologize remains', to know and name the body to make it 'stay in its place', then Speght conjures a spectre whose alterity cannot be entirely ontologised or anthologised.[29] The spectre's injunction 'speaks at the same time several times – and in several voices': Chaucer's lively corpse, conjured by Speght's editorial apparatus in the prefatory poem 'The Reader to Geffery Chaucer', is accompanied by the multivocal corpus and its 'tangible intangibility of a proper body without flesh, but still the body of some*one* as some*one other*'.[30] The section of 'His Death' concludes with the eighth ode of Horace's fourth book, emphasising the spectral qualities of Chaucer's poetry: "the Muse forbids the virtuous man to die".[31] Speght's edition remained haunted by the heterogeneity of its inheritance, which Chaucer's

poetry forbids 'to die'.

Melancholia, rather than mourning, produces spectres in the prologue to Fletcher and Shakespeare's *Two Noble Kinsmen*, an adaptation of Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale*. Here, the recirculated tropes of Chaucer's spirit are marked by a melancholic ambivalence that dramatises an anxiety of inheritance. The prologue, unusually, notes the play's inherited source through the extended sexual metaphor which introduces its 'noble breeder' – "Father Chaucer".[32] However, the ambivalence of the prologue's shifting tones may be an attempt to disavow the play's debt to the past. The play opens with bawdy comedy, with a male actor stepping onto the Jacobean stage and declaring: 'New plays and maidenheads are near akin | Much followed both, for both much money gi'en, | if they stand sound and well' (ll. 1-3). The wry reversal in the second line (much [...] both' to 'both much') lowers the tone of the reference to virginity, whilst the final clause casts doubt on the integrity of both plays and chastity. The base notes of the extended metaphor continue as 'first night's stir' comes quickly after 'holy tie'; the 'Modesty [...] of the maid' is again doubted as the sub-clause — 'to sight' — undercuts the statement (ll. 6-8). This series of mixed metaphors, casting the play as the virgin, the husband, then the 'child', humorously cast doubt on the symbolic purity of the image (l. 16). In this context, the invocation of the play's 'noble breeder' is debased, and the 'pure' vitality of the Father of English Poetry is questioned, recanting the play's debt to the past (l. 10).

The prologue may be said to perform its inheritance, conjuring the figure of a poetic father through: 'I who am because of him, owing to him', to affirm the play's lineage and cultural value.[33] The trope of Chaucer as a Renaissance man is recirculated by emphasising his continental legacy, as we can see through: 'Our play [...] | It has a noble breeder and a pure | A learned, and a poet never went | More famously yet 'twixt Po and Silver Trent' (ll. 10-12). As Alex Davis writes, he is 'presented [as] something like an English Petrarch'.[34] Indeed, 'learned' echoes the 'epithets newly applied to Chaucer' by Speght.[35] However, the image of Chaucer as a poetic father is marked by ambivalence; the metaphor's integrity is undercut by the crude humour established in the prologue, troubling the vitality of the medieval afterlife. Moreover, this prelude to the invocation of Chaucer acts as a riddle; the caesura after the answer, 'Chaucer,' allows space for laughter at the unexpected debasement of the Father of the play (l. 13). As argued by Misha Teramura, the "improper" humour surrounding virginity and paternity reflects an 'anxiety of influence' which the work of melancholy seeks to bury.[36]

As the entrance to a play filled with traces of medieval and early modern antiquity, this prologue stages a melancholic 'battle of ambivalence', conjuring a spectre of Chaucer and 'so to speak, even killing it'.[37] This is accomplished through ventriloquising Chaucer's bones:

> How will it shake the bones of that good man
> And make him cry from underground, "Oh, fan
> From me the witless chaff of such a writer
> That blasts my bays and my famed works makes lighter
> Than Robin Hood!" (ll. 17-21).

This Chaucer voices a hyperbolic anxiety surrounding the legacy of his corpus, with his pride being comically parodied: the low culture references to 'Robin Hood' slipping from the tongue of the Father of Poetry, and his spirit ending speech midline rather than rhyming, demonstrates that his words are not 'learned' or even particularly artful. This Chaucer is represented by mere bones: circulating the fully decayed corpse denies its vitality and emphasises the biological time elapsed between the medieval and Jacobean periods. Furthermore, the prologue self-consciously foregrounds the act of ventriloquizing, as Chaucer's cry is placed in the conditional future rather than the present, rendering Chaucer a merely figurative presence. However, beneath the comic tone lies a 'fear' that the spectre may return with a different, more threatening 'cry' (l. 21). The haunted threshold of the prologue may be crossed when the play properly begins, however this necessitates passing over the 'bones', whose 'sleep' eludes the finality of death (l. 29). The play remains haunted by the fear that the spectre of Chaucer has not returned for the last time, thus affirming the spectral life of the bones which it seeks to deny.

Each text circulates corpses and corpuses from the medieval past to construct a reformed spirit of the early modern age: 'The Jest of Dane Hew' circulates the monk's corpse to deny religious inheritance from the Catholic past; Speght circulates Chaucer's corpus to develop a cultural inheritance which affirms the project of the present; Fletcher and Shakespeare struggle with the weight of literary inheritance. Each conjuration is accompanied by a melancholic anxiety which affirms the spectral presence which cannot be acculturated, attesting to the continued vitality of the medieval past in the early modern present.

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Human and Non-Human Entanglement and the Destabilisation of Human Exceptionalism and Ideal Communities

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Entanglement is a concept that emphasises the interconnected state of all beings, unsettling anthropocentric paradigms of thought. It furthermore challenges what is meant by community, a concept that is typically constituted through human relations. I will argue that entanglement destabilises human notions of community positing that we, *all living beings*, are bound up together within enmeshed relations. The category of the human shall be put into dialogue with stones, animality, as well as the monstrous. I recognise that to use the blunt category of the human ignores the multiplicity of cultures and histories that form humankind, but to explore a category with such a wealth of complexity is outside of the scope of this essay. Therefore, the focus of this essay will establish how medieval understandings of stones let us modify our sensibilities to embrace a wider definition of self. In addition, this essay will also reveal, through anthropomorphism, the entangled relations between animals and humans, with *The Nun's Priest's Tale* offering a critique of anthropocentrism. Finally, the category of the monstrous blurs differences between humans and werewolves to emphasise the violence of men, and dangers of forming communities around anthropocentric ideals.

According to medieval understandings, stones exhibit agency because of the effects they had on humans that altered human behaviour. In Bartholomaeus Anglicus' *On the Property of Things*, for example, magnets 'reconsileþ and acordeþ bytwene men and here wyfes', specifically affecting 'grace and fairnesse in speche and wordes'.[1] By illustrating these cognitive effects, humans are entangled with stones due to their agency over them. In addition, when a magnet is 'ysette vnder hede of a chaste wyf makeþ hire sodeinlinche to byclippe hire housbonde', or she is 'unfaithful schal moeue hire out of þe bedde sodeynliche by drede of fatasye' (*Properties*, p.857). The entry presents stones as influencing human behaviour; instead of being inanimate they have an effecting agency. This upsets our contemporary understanding of stones as insentient. For contemporary readers, it would be comical to think of a magnet as being able to reveal whether a wife has cheated on her spouse or not. However, it offers us an alternative view of the world by emphasising the mutually influencing relationship we share as a consequence of being entangled with stones.[2] It subsequently changes how we look at our relations on, and with, the earth.

To understand how it is possible to be bound in a mutually reciprocal relationship with stones it is necessary to reflect on the notion of sensibility: the capacity to perceive other possibilities. For Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, when we shift our sensibilities we see stones as 'more than fixed and immobile things, as partners in errantry'.[3] Cohen draws on the importance of our sensibilities, positing that to change them is to then have 'facts likewise begin to ambulate' (*In stone*, p.12), demonstrating the potential of what is possible when we are open to new possibilities. An extract on 'Diamonds', from *The Book of John Mandeville*, explores this potential. Mandeville states that a diamond is able to give a man 'victorye of his enemyes' if his 'cause be trywe', as well as that 'nore wylde bestes shal greve hym ne assayle hym'.[4] While it might not be true that diamonds protect humans from wild animals, Mandeville's entry on diamonds offers an alternative worldview. Being open to different possibilities allows us to rethink our categories. Stones are not represented as inert matter, indeed their materiality is bound up with humans. For example, diamonds are shown to share a relationship with humans, even having an effect on them. In the case of Mandeville, diamonds provide victory to men whose causes are just. Even if we know that diamonds do not bring victory in battle, it allows us to realise that it is possible for stones to be entangled with humans; for a reciprocal relationship between humans and stones to be conceived. Therefore, a change in sensibility has the ability to shape relationships within the world around us. Furthermore, it is possible to figure ourselves entangled in a wider network, if our sensibilities allow for it.

The medieval sensibility within *The Book of John Mandeville* results in acts of anthropomorphism that blur boundaries between the human and the non-human. It was written that diamonds were produced since 'they growth togodres the maule and the female and they engendreth comunely' creating 'smale dyamoundes' (*Diamonds*, ll.1517-19). This belief gives diamonds human attributes, as they are ostensibly able to sexually reproduce through the coming together of a male and female. The act of anthropomorphising the diamonds blurs the boundaries between human and non-human. Additionally, it illustrates that according to a medieval understanding humans did not just share a porous relationship with stones, but also traits. A medieval understanding of stones, as evidenced in texts such as John Mandeville's, allows for a re-imagining of relations between humans and non-humans and ultimately challenges the notion of what we think of as human.

Within the poem *Ichot a Burde in a Bour as Berly so Bryht*, humans and gems share similar virtues, further widening the category of the human. The speaker of the poem 'for charbocle ich hire ches bi chynant by chere' thus comparing his love interest to the precious stone 'charbocle', a carbuncle.[5] Comparing her to a 'charbocle' shows how she is believed to be virtuous in the same way precious gems were bestowed with virtues (*Properties*, p. 857). At the time virtues were understood as a type of vitality or as being a physical ability, therefore, specifying humans and stones shared a common vitality.[6] One virtue shared by both the precious gem and the Lady in the poem

is 'myht' (*Bryht*, l.8). The quality of 'myht' can be associated with notions of might in relation to the body or soul, as well as used to describe virtues within stones.[7] As the lady has 'myht', just like the emerald, it demonstrates that stones and humans are capable of sharing a common vitality. Additionally, she is compared to an 'onycle he ys, on yholden on hyht' aligning the speakers' love interest with an 'onycle', which is associated with virtues of hope (*Bryht*, l.5).

Shared traits between humans and stones consequently result in the category of the human becoming entangled with other forms of being, since 'each human is a heterogenous compound of wonderfully vibrant, dangerously vibrant, matter'.[8] By destabilising what it means to be human, it allows us to 'cultivate a broader definition of self and of interest' (*Vibrant*, p. 13), as Jane Bennett argues, which has wider implications for notions of community as we no longer have to see the human as distinctly singular. Indeed, to be human means to become enmeshed in relation with other forms of being, challenging anthropocentric notions of community. Readings of *Ichot a Burde in a Bour as Beryle So Bryht* illustrate that to widen the definition of self is to open up to shared virtues of hope and might, proving to be empowering and reinforcing the necessity of cultivating non-anthropocentric interests. Having recognised the importance of destabilising anthropocentric notions of self, to emphasise our entangled state and challenge notions of community, I will turn to human and animal relations.

In Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Nun's Priest's Tale*, anthropomorphism also destabilises categories of the human and animals. The protagonist in this tale, Chauntecleer, is described as being a 'gentil cok' that 'hadde in his governaunce severne hennes for to doon al his pleasaunce' with them being his 'sustres and his paramours'.[9] Immediately the reader recognises that the animals have been given human characteristics. Furthermore, Chauntecleer says to his favourite wife Petelote; 'my swevene recche aright' (*Priest's Tale*, l.2896), demonstrating that the animals are able to speak and even interpret dreams. Giving animals human traits blurs boundaries between categories of the human and animal, which has the effect of decentring humans and emphasising human entanglement with other beings. Bennett argues for the necessity of anthropomorphism because it shows that 'human agency has some echoes in non-human nature' (*Vibrant*, p. xvi). Significantly, anthropomorphism allows us to disrupt typical understandings of what it is to be human: opening up categories of humanness to become entangled with animality, as the sovereignty of the human is undermined.

Chaucer also uses humour as a device, intermingled with anthropomorphism, to criticise anthropocentric worldviews. While explaining his nightmare, Chauntecleer reads the work of 'Catoun that hath of wisdom swich a greet renoun' (*Priest's Tale*, l. 2972). A rooster reading scholarly works to understand his dreams is funny and additionally, consulting 'oon of the gretteste aucteur that men rede' (*Priest's Tale*, l. 2984) for a nightmare, conveys a comical sense of self-importance. Chauntecleer's actions result in him presenting human traits, as the idea of animals analysing their dreams is ridiculous. What Bennett refers to as 'echoes of human agency in non-human nature' are ridiculed, evidencing that anthropomorphism can be critical of anthropocentric tendencies and decentralise them.

The criticism of anthropocentrism continues as Chauntecleer's hubris almost leads to his death, which represents the dangers of believing in human exceptionalism. Chauntecleer resting on the beams, as he 'deigned not to sette his foot to grounde' (*Priest's Tale*, l. 3181), illustrates his pride as he literally positions himself above others. This is similar to how anthropocentrism operates; humans place themselves above other life forms on the great chain of being. Being a proud creature, Chauntecleer is susceptible to flattery, shown by his encounter with the fox; when complimented 'this Chauntecleer his wynges gan to bete', conveying his excitation as 'so was he ravysshed with his flaterie' (*Priest's Tale*, ll.3322-24). Chauntecleer's behaviour leads to him agreeing to the fox's request for him to sing, with Chauntecleer 'streccynge his nekke, and heeld his eyen cloos' (*Priest's Tale*, l.3332). This image conveys the great pride Chauntecleer takes in singing, his eyes closed evidences his blindness to the malicious intent of the fox's flattery due to his excessive pride. It is the moment when Chauntecleer 'crowe loude for the nones' that 'by the gargat hente Chauntecleer' (*Priest's Tale*, l.3333), demonstrating that his hubris is dangerous, almost causing his death. Additionally, the scene emphasises that it is Chauntecleer's unawareness that brings him close to dying, which can be read as allegorical for human exceptionalism that is founded on pride that places humans at the centre of creation. Hence, this reinforces the importance of entanglement as a concept that broadens definitions of what is human by reminding humankind that they are not above other beings, stressing the importance of including animals in community to prevent anthropocentrism.

A cross-species collaboration prevents Chauntecleer's death, allowing readers to question the concept of community. Not only do the hens 'out at dores stirten they anon'(*Priest's Tale*, l.3377), but also 'out of the hybe cam the swarm of bees' (*Priest's Tale*, l.3392) establishing a cross-species collective effort to save Chauntecleer. In addition, there is a cacophony of sound as we are told of the 'berkyng of the dogges and shoutyng of the men and women eeke' (*Priest's Tale*, l.3386-87) that conveys a unity between humans and non-humans. Despite the different verbs 'berkyng' and 'shoutyng', which denote the fundamental difference between humans and animals, they are nonetheless able to come together for the same goal of saving Chauntecleer. During this moment of the tale, Susan Crane's question becomes pertinent; 'is a 'community' in evidence when all its putative members react in some way to a threat from the outside?'.[10] If so, it illustrates the possibilities available for cross-species communities that defy anthropocentric conceptions of communities. Moreover, it is suggestive of the force with which it is possible to act, since the collective formed to save Chauntecleer made it seem 'it semed as that hevene sholde falle' (*Priest's Tale*, l.3401). Expanding the notion of community makes it possible to deal with a variety of external threats. Although beyond the scope of this essay, the necessity of cross-species communities allows us to posit a response to the threat of climate crisis.

The category of the human is further unsettled when reflecting on hybridity as presented by Marie de France's *Bisclavret*. The humanising function of clothes in the story illustrates how precarious the boundaries are between humans and the monstrous. Clothes are significant, as upon Bisclavret telling his wife that he transforms into a werewolf, her first question is 'whether he undressed or remained clothed'.[11] Bisclavret's wife's first concern being whether he is clothed or not conveys the shame associated with a naked human body. In addition, clothes are what enable Bisclavret to transform to his human state as if he 'lost them and were discovered in that state' he should 'remain a werewolf forever' (*Bisclavret*, p. 69). The ability clothes have to transform Bisclavret back into a human evidences their humanising function. It tells us that what separates humans from the monstrous is clothes, consequently belying any sense of intrinsic human exceptionalism. Towards the end of the story Bisclavret's clothes are returned to him, though 'nothing would induce him to put on his clothing in front of' people 'or change his animal form' (*Bisclavret*, p. 72). Bisclavret's modesty in not dressing in public illustrates human qualities, enabling Bisclavret to elide this boundary and emphasise its permeability. Clothes have the role of differentiating the monstrous from the human to demonstrate that there is not much that separates the two categories.

What determines what is monstrous or human in this narrative is social hierarchies, and the ability to recognise them. When the King goes hunting in the forest that Bisclavret lives in, the Bisclavret is hunted until 'they were just about to capture him, tear him to pieces and destroy him' (*Bisclavret*, p. 70). Bisclavret survives because 'as soon as he saw the King he ran up to him and begged for mercy' (*Bisclavret*, p. 70), demonstrating that as a werewolf he is able to recognise the King and understand hierarchies of the court. In particular, 'he took hold of his stirrup and kissed his foot and his leg' (*Bisclavret*, p. 70), conveying respect through human codes of action. Communicating in human terms results in the King announcing that Bisclavret has 'the intelligence of a human', with the King subsequently saying: 'I shall place the creature under my protection' (*Bisclavret*, p. 70). Demonstrating an understanding of courtly hierarchies allows Bisclavret to be recognised as having intelligence, and even to 'sleep amongst the knights, just by the king' (*Bisclavret*, p. 70), eliding differences between the category of human and monstrous. Therefore, Bisclavret's acceptance in court as a werewolf emphasises the importance of social hierarchy in determining what actions are read as human, or monstrous.

By providing further evidence to challenge the differences between the human and the monstrous, human social hierarchies are shown as violent. For example, readers are shown only the humans hunting; they are portrayed as more violent than Bisclavret as they attempt to 'tear him to pieces and destroy him' (*Bisclavret*, p. 70). This conveys the monstrous violence of humans, which is contrasted against Bisclavret's absence of aggression in this passage. Hence, the use of social hierarchies to define monstrosity becomes difficult, for what is human is also monstrous in its displays of violence. Furthermore, humans project onto beasts aspects of humankind viewed as unacceptable, in this case violence, increasingly collapsing the differences between the monstrous and the human.[12] Thus, the brutality caused by humans shows that they are not above other beings, which undermines communities formed around anthropocentric values.

Bisclavret's attack on his former wife also destabilises boundaries between the human and monstrous. After seeing his former wife, Bisclavret 'dashed towards her like a madman' (*Bisclavret*, p. 71) evidencing the human aspects of his behaviour, in particular his uninhibited rage; what is seen to be monstrous, the raging attack, is described within human terms. In addition, the attack on his former wife collapses differences between werewolf and human since Bisclavret anthropomorphically 'took his revenge' (*Bisclavret*, p. 71); an act typically human. Bisclavret's actions are also rationalised as 'he has some grudge against her' (*Bisclavret*, p. 71), further humanising him. As revenge rationalises violence, and rationality is unique to humans, this act of violence has a uniquely human quality that humanises Bisclavret. Moreover, it is violence that allows Bisclavret to return to his human state because after being subjected to 'torture' the Lady admits 'the beast was Bisclavret' (*Bisclavret*, p. 71–2) and returns his clothes to him. This scene complicates the Cartesian opposition of what is human and what is monstrous, as violence is demonstrated as a humanising trait. Violence is even rewarded as the King 'restored his land' to Bisclavret and gave him 'more than I can tell' (*Bisclavret*, p. 72). The dualism of the monstrous and human collapses as what is human encapsulates many believed characteristics of the monstrous. To form communities centred around humans is to thus propagate violence: due to the violent qualities of humans. These qualities are projected onto 'Others' to reinforce a sense of human exceptionalism, though as such qualities are also intrinsically human anthropocentric ideals are always undermined.

Both concepts of entanglement and community convey that we are bound up in mutually reciprocal relations with all types of beings. These concepts allow us to cultivate a broader definition of self, which challenges typical notions of community. Medieval understandings of the properties of stones emphasise the significance of developing sensibilities that allow for the vibrant matters that we are enmeshed with to be recognised. Anthropomorphism illustrates the entangled relations between animals and humans, decentring the belief of the sovereign human, and in the case of *The Nun's Priest's Tale* critiquing it as well. *Bisclavret* collapses differences between the monstrous and the human representing the dangers of forming communities according to anthropocentric values, due to the violence it incites. Therefore, concepts of entanglement and community destabilise cherished beliefs of human exceptionalism, evidencing their shortcomings. This, however, is not without proposing visions of community bound through enmeshment that recognise our shared vibrancy.

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The Paradox of the 'Utopic Place': The Significance of Place and Space in Aemilia Lanyer's 'The Description of Cooke-ham' and Thomas More's *Utopia*

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Rendering space as a utopia, somewhere which '[experiments] with spatial imagination [to] reconceptualise the relationship between space and subject' is intrinsic to Aemilia Lanyer's country-house poem 'The Description of Cooke-ham' and Thomas More's *Utopia*.[1] The scope of experimentation implies that utopic places are rife with possibility, which Lanyer and More seemingly invoke, through the depiction of Cookham as a femicentric garden-state and Utopia as a peaceful, prosperous island. These idylls, however, are hindered by geographical and social restrictions in both texts. This essay's aim is therefore twofold: it aims to argue that geographical issues inhibit the stability of the spaces, and that the 'places' are inextricable from their endemic social dynamics, which cause problems that reflect onto the space itself. Subsequently, the depiction of spaces as lasting, egalitarian utopias is derided, with the concept of a 'utopic place' ultimately being deemed paradoxical.

Utopian studies have often deemed architecture as reflective of the space's particular social values, a trope which is apparent in both 'Cooke-ham' and *Utopia*.[2] Lanyer's engagement, however, is paradoxical: 'Cooke-ham' is considered the first English country-house poem, but it disregards the estate's house entirely; by only considering 'each plant, each floure, each tree', Lanyer renders 'that delightfull Place' a garden-state.[3] The house would embody what Pohl terms a '[masculinist] gendered spatiality'.[4] By focusing solely on the gardens, Lanyer rejects patriarchy and feminises her garden-state. Cookham provides an opportunity for patriarchal subversion; coupled with the iambic stresses on 'delightfull Place', Lanyer's garden-state becomes not only an aesthetic *locus amoenus*, but also encapsulates female possibility. Paula Guimarães argues that Cookham '[recalls] the Christian Eden' to invoke 'social and spiritual harmony', but only Countess Margaret Clifford, 'Cooke-ham's addressee, can 'see' the 'stately Tree's 'goodly Prospects''.[5] [6] Lanyer parallels Eden through positioning the tree as central to her garden-state, but Cookham's tree focuses on 'goodly Prospects', rejecting the sin of Eden's Tree of Knowledge. It lauds femininity, which appears harmonious but sanctions the construction of an exclusively matriarchal hierarchy which is innately vulnerable to external, hegemonic influences. The garden-state appears therefore paradisical, but is precarious; even a 'utopic' female space cannot evade the destruction of its physical and social structures.

Architecture in *Utopia*, meanwhile, is depicted in meticulous detail: 'each house is three storeys high' '[with] doors opening both onto the street and into the garden'.[7] The nationwide uniformity reflects Utopia's outwardly egalitarian society and this homogeneity invokes Utopia's communistic values as every inhabitant receives the same amenities. However, the state's endeavour to make architecture 'as alike as the nature of the [cities' sites allow]' illustrates a horrifying, totalitarian regime.[8] The architecture constantly imposes on citizens, with every building towering 'three storeys high', and 'doors opening' both ways to violate privacy and enable interminable observation. Utopia, then, becomes a place where even the spatial construction becomes complicit in limiting citizens' freedom. The citizens are denied autonomy to move freely: as Antonis Balasopoulos argues, the Utopians impose 'prescribed territorial limits' in their 'obsessive' restriction of movement, with punishments for breaches being 'brought back like a fugitive' and 'sentenced to slavery' as Raphael Hythloday contends.[9] [10] Balasopoulos correctly identifies the regime as 'obsessive', but it is evident that the punishments also emphasise the state's totalitarian control. Space is weaponised to maintain obedience; by restricting movement, space becomes commodified, rendering it incongruous with utopian values and representative of space and society's connection.

Cookham and Utopia, despite seemingly being utopic places, both have intrinsic spatial paradoxes which distance the utopic ideal from reality. 'Cooke-ham' omits masculinist architecture to construct a feminist garden-state, but this omission leaves the space susceptible to the weather. The garden-state's summer prosperity is attributed to the Countess' presence:

> The trees with leaves, with fruits, with flowers clad[...]
> Turning themselves to beauteous Canopies,
> To shade the bright Sunne from your brighter eies.[11]

As the trees turn to 'beauteous Canopies' in response to the Countess' 'brighter eies', Lanyer establishes a human-like, utopic, albeit impossible, relationship between Clifford and Cookham's garden. Christine Coch emphasises this connection, arguing that the garden '[transforms] into a magically responsive haven', creating a 'matrimonial "Paradice"' in Clifford's presence; Clifford, therefore, becomes the matriarch overseeing a femicentric Eden.[12] Coch's argument, and Lanyer herself through presenting Clifford as 'brighter' than the 'Sunne', extensively laud Cookham's utopic responsivity, but ignore its vulnerability to external influences which make the Edenic garden's 'Fall' inevitable. Despite Lanyer accrediting the garden-state's prosperity to Clifford's presence, the effects of seasonal change manifest following the poem's volta, impairing the garden's beauty. Lanyer maintains her fictionalised relationship, blaming Cookham's 'bare and desolate' appearance on 'cold griefe'

following Clifford's departure, but the adjective 'cold' denotes winter's onset.[13] Cookham's façade of a femicentric Edenic space is destroyed as the weather changes; the lack of architecture prevents Clifford from remaining in the garden-state over winter. The spatial utopia is broken by the seasons, with the once 'responsive haven' becoming a postlapsarian Eden as Lanyer's poem invokes elegy.

Utopia's entire construction is paradoxical: the island is a circle 'five hundred miles in circumference' with its widest point '[extending] two hundred miles', dimensions which Brian Goodey identifies as impossible.[14] [15] Goodey's article enables the viewpoint that Utopia is not merely fictional, but innately satirical; More continues this satire by employing antiphrasis to name geographical features: from Greek, 'Utopia' translates to 'No-place' and the river 'Anyder' to 'waterless'. Furthermore, Utopia's island status is nonsensical, as the 'fifteen miles wide' channel separating it from the mainland was man-made, instead of forming through geographical processes. A man-made gulf of such magnitude subverts geographical theory so blatantly that the island itself can only be perceived as satirical. By continuously satirising Utopia through paradoxes, More derogates its endemic 'utopian' ideals by extension, presenting them as something incongruous with 'serious' reality.

Space is utilised in Lanyer's and More's utopias to reinforce the gendered realities established by the places' social dynamics. Lanyer's garden-state has a distinctly matriarchal social structure, which seemingly enables its beauty, '[y]et you (great Lady) Mistris of that Place / From whose desires did spring this worke of Grace'.[17] The stressed rhyming couplet conflates the *locus amoenus* with the graceful femininity of Clifford's conduct, a relationship amplified as Cookham's beauty '[dies]' after Clifford's daughter, Anne, acquiesces to patriarchal expectations by marrying Dorset, '[u]nconstant Fortune [...] [w]ho casts us downe into so lowe a frame'.[18] The Cliffords were in an inheritance battle as Lanyer wrote 'Cooke-ham', so the garden-state appears to be Lanyer gifting the Cliffords a female space. Anne's marriage, however, denotes the patriarchy's ability, even from *ex situ*, to impose on femicentric spaces. Anne's subservience to hegemonic tradition 'casts' the women into the 'lowe frame' of exile from the utopia, overriding the female autonomy that Lanyer attempts to imbue into Cookham. Lanyer's elegiac tone mourns this exile, but also portrays the utopia's fallibility: if her space was truly 'utopic', female autonomy would be claimed without incident. Instead, the women depart, causing both them, and the garden-state to suffer. The female 'utopia', therefore, is a restricted place; the patriarchy can impose on it, even if the place seemingly rejects masculinity in construction.

More's island, contrastingly, is not subjected to spatial restriction: *Utopia*'s engagement with space, therefore, can only be masculine, undermining gender equality despite Utopia's doctrine of egalitarianism. Spatial expansion manifests through colonialism, unearthing further spatial and social contradictions: the citizens 'loathe [war] as a bestial activity', yet willingly colonise other land if their population overgrows, '[making] war' on any resisting natives.[19] Space is a primitive indicator of Utopian hypocrisy, with their perceived entitlement to land sanctioning inherently capitalistic behaviours: as Balasopoulos states, '[colonization] liberates [others] from land' so the colonisers can utilise it for their own benefit.[20] The moral superiority of Utopian ideals is therefore doubly flawed; colonialism and the land being a motive for Utopian war render space a commodity that Utopia exploits, behaviour which is incongruous with their official derogation of private property. Entitlement to land, moreover, is integral to Utopia's very existence, as Hythloday relates Utopus' colonisation and his subsequent indoctrination of the 'brutish and uncultivated inhabitants'.[21] The communistic ideals of the Utopian citizens are consequently a paradox themselves as they were instilled through colonialist expansion, a distinctly capitalist exploit. Thus, space betrays the underlying hypocrisy in 'utopian' ideals; it should be problematised as a commodity, but actually remains openly desired.

Cookham's and Utopia's spaces are not immune to political influence: the speaker's motives cause them to be depicted in particular ways. Lanyer's whole work, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, is sycophantic to multiple women as Lanyer searched for patronage, with 'Cooke-ham' dedicated to Clifford; subsequently, the garden-state kneeling 'to salute' Clifford's 'honour' becomes politicised.[22] Lanyer metaphorises her financial dependence on Clifford through Cookham's 'salute' and its 'sad dismay' after she departs; its admiration and reliance upon her parallels Lanyer's.[23] Cookham is Edenic in its ability to seemingly dissolve pre-existing social constructs, but this benefits *Lanyer*, not Clifford, '[r]emember beauteous *Dorsets* former sports [...] Wherein my selfe did alwaies beare a part'.[24] Su Fang Ng argues that Lanyer '[carves] a poetic space for herself' in Cookham, but Lanyer partaking in Anne's 'sports' takes this further: the garden-state enables Lanyer to carve an otherwise-impossible social standing for herself.[25] Place and space are thereby vectors for Lanyer's self-preoccupation: her garden-state seems utopic for the female sex, but this is only because the garden-state is an impossible reality.

As Utopia's geographical dimensions strikingly '[parallel] the geography of the British Isles', such overlap not only enables conflation of the two states' spatial geography, but also of the practices occurring on such space.[26] Utopia's practice of '[cultivating] the soil' juxtaposes English enclosure practices of '[driving] the workers of the [land] out', with both seemingly transpiring on similar parameters, amplifying the apparent Utopian superiority.[27] Hythloday, critical of European practices, attempts to blame thievery within English society on enclosure, arguing that despite Utopia having the same spatial boundaries, their cultivating practices prevent crime. This ideal is undercut, however, as Hythloday later relates how the Utopians colonise 'redundant land' for agricultural production, thereby extending their space far beyond English parameters.[28] Subsequently, space proves to be the inhibitor of Hythloday's attempt to derogate England: the idealised Utopian practices are deemed as impossible to ensue in a place of England's size, thereby distancing them from manifesting in a 'real' society.

In exploring how place and space expose the paradoxical reality of the 'utopic place' in Renaissance texts, this essay reveals how 'utopia' is a fantastical ideal which can never stably manifest within

a realistic society. Lanyer and More's spaces emphasise that geographical and social issues are too impactful on utopias to make the extent of their possibilities attainable; although they seem to be close to depicting true utopias, they reveal restrictions and insufficiencies which distance their spaces from the ideal they are supposed to embody. It is possible, then, to assume that Renaissance utopias are more weapons of political fantasy, and space's most significant role is providing the basis to imagine these fantasies.

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Trees as Characters: Challenging the Anthropocene through Non-Human Drama in Richard Powers' *The Overstory*

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In *The Future of Environmental Criticism* Lawrence Buell asserts that a text's 'setting was mere backdrop for the human drama that really counted'.[1] However this is a problematic and reductive argument, ultimately restricting the radical potential of dialogue in novels as it assumes there must be a binary opposition between the central drama and the periphery setting. Richard Powers' novel *The Overstory* and Amitav Ghosh's theoretical work *The Great Derangement* prove this argument to be overly simplistic through their recasting of the environment not as a mere setting, but instead as a critical narrative element to be protected instead of ignored. As nature is portrayed as a central interlocutor it defines the conversation within these two works, imposing itself on both perspective and action and thus making it impossible to dislocate the setting from the 'human drama', ultimately leading to the questioning of common consensus within the Anthropocenic generation. This essay will therefore argue that these two works dispel the perception of nature as a static setting, as the development of the fictional drama in Powers' novel and Ghosh's real-world accounts of stories rely on nature's influence. The fundamental environmental position of the historical novel is therefore scrutinised until it becomes unconvincing, thus permitting human drama to concede the foreground to nature.

The Overstory and *The Great Derangement* are both committed to the undermining of established novel form, going to great lengths to critique the story of the individual that characterises much of twentieth and twenty-first century literary fiction. Ghosh's theory that 'the contemporary novel has become ever more radically centred on the individual psyche' and obscures 'the men in the aggregate' is striking, as the usage of 'aggregate' signifies an incompleteness inherent to the novel form's frequent individualism.[2] Comparatively, *The Overstory* utilises what Marco Caracciolo refers to as a 'network-like narrative' which is bound by not only 'their lives — considered collectively' but also by networks of trees.[3] The novel's form is emblematic of this, as there is a gradual liquidation of the distinctions between characters as the narrative progresses. This process of decharacterisation is two-fold: first, in the chapter 'Roots' the narrative voice rapidly moves from one character to the next, not allowing for any of them to become the otherwise singular and thus individualistic voice of the novel. Subsequently, these individual lives separated by subsections under the chapter title 'Roots' are gradually interconnected within 'Trunk', with the initially separate plotlines within each subsection becoming entangled, enabling the intertwining of the characters' perspectives and the unification of their formerly personal stories. In this way, the underground, implicit connections of 'Roots' become impossible to overlook within 'Trunk', finally erasing the myth of disconnected individualism in favour of a more holistic gestalt. Complacent perceptions of one character's centrality, as in most novels, are therefore disregarded, and instead the collective voice over the singular becomes intrinsically necessary to permit this type of story, as the story is outside of any individual's scope. Caracciolo's assertion that the network resembles a network of trees is itself asserted by the five activists' gradual congregation, such as Nick and Olivia's meeting in 'Trunk'. In this interaction, 'Olivia Vandergriff holds Nick Hoel's hand for a moment, feeling for an explanation'.[4] Here Powers inverts the conventional journey for inner truth by turning it outwards, therefore invalidating individualism being prioritised over all else. The 'feeling' action also contributes to this effect, as it is not through emotive means that the connection is forged, which mentally binds the two and provides a foundation for the activist group that they will later assimilate others into in a process of mutual exchange. Through feeling, Powers creates an initial mutualism between these two characters that is a microcosm for the strengthening connections throughout the novel, conceiving humanity and nature not as foreground and backdrop, but as equally significant.

The prioritisation of nature and its numerous benefits to humanity are advocated for in both texts, with Powers presenting it by the photographing of the Hoel tree. Ghosh argues that literature has systematically sought to eradicate the outlandish and instead feature only everyday events understandable to us, with a declaration that '[p]robability and the modern novel are in fact twins'.[5] Ghosh further declares that 'what [makes novels] distinctive is precisely the concealment of those exceptional moments that serve as the motor of narrative'.[6] This outlines a conflict that is difficult to reconcile, which is that the preoccupation with adding realistic, probable granular detail obscures the actual narrative, in turn hiding the driving force of the novel itself within the incidental. Powers addresses this flaw in the treatment of the human drama parallel to the growth of the Hoel tree, as the narrative does not examine every event within the 350-year span of the tree's growth. Instead, '[t]he generations of grudge, courage, forbearance, and surprise generosity: everything a human being might call the *story* happens outside his photos' frame' [emphasis original].[7] By prioritising the chestnut, the chestnut blight is therefore foregrounded, which is an early indication of an urgency ascribed to ecological issues. Moreover, through the lack of focus on the human drama itself, and by only referring to it in the broadest terms, the tree takes centre stage, which is represented by it being the only subject of '[the Hoel] photos' frame'. The novel's thesis statement is therefore superseded, integrating nature back into the everyday detail that it is usually omitted from. However, the place of humans is still assured. Through the character of the human photographer there is still a level of reliance by nature on humans to steward the earth, which is further represented through the human drama being referenced at all, however briefly. In this

sense, Ghosh's proposed 'concealment of [the] exceptional' has been replaced with an exhibition of it, with the 'probable' being shifted into the background. Human drama is still commented on, but this is undergoing a process of being moved into the background while the setting of nature and the environment finds itself transformed into a foregrounding character in the narrative.

Despite the human focus of both texts, the human drama ends up nullifying their ability to achieve anything until they fray at the seams. Powers' novel foresees this within the later 'Crown' and 'Seeds' chapters, as the four remaining activists separate in the aftermath of both Olivia's death and Adam's refusal to send for an ambulance. Even without these circumstances, Ghosh describes the unlikelihood that protest movements will prevail, as 'such movements usually take years, even decades, to build', and that 'security establishments around the world have already made extensive preparations for dealing with activism'.[8] The ability of the band of humans to make any positive impact whatsoever is therefore illusory, but also represents the hubris of established security forces to shut down dialogue. It is ordinary, then, and ultimately inevitable, for the fight between Nick and Adam to occur, which Powers describes with an almost Hemingway-esque terseness as '[t]he artist charges the psychologist'.[9] It is in this moment that their activist identities are immediately dismantled in favour of that of their former professions, reincorporating them into the previously disregarded individualistic framework. Furthermore, when Adam and Douglas finally meet again, the admission that later lands Adam in prison is that '*We set buildings on fire. We did*' [emphasis original].[10] Not only is the context for these actions completely erased within these two sentences, but their simplicity may also dictate that the aims of the arson have been completely forgotten to both parties, and so they mean nothing. Their perception of the events is therefore replaced with those fighting for nature's eradication in the name of more profit, dividing them from their earlier idealistic selves and accomplishing nothing. Franz Mauelshagen notes how Ghosh incorporates a theory of reversal into modernity that questions human dominion over nature, and this is inverted by Powers to deny the activists their autonomy and any influence whatsoever.[11] Nature is then able to implicitly move into the foreground, as the human drama cannot amount to any action being taken whatsoever due to the entrenched forces that move against any semblance of change.

Human drama's rendering as inconsequential means that human characters lose their perceived influence, subsequently requiring non-human forces to act as interlocutors to impact narrative. *The Overstory*'s denouement features Nick and unnamed Native Americans collaborating on a natural art installation within a forest. However, unlike prior depictions of nature within the novel, their dominion over this land is short-lived, evident in the imagery of how '[a]lready, the mosses surge over, the beetles and lichen and fungi turning the mosses to soil'.[12] The mosses' assumption of control over the artwork, as well as its ensuing transformation, shifts perspective from a human frame of reference to one of nature. Ghosh claims that 'modernity [deepens] the imaginary gulf between Nature and Culture', which is embodied by the fate of Nick's artwork.[13] However, rather than culture prevailing over nature, with nature as a mere setting, nature eventually overshadows culture. Additionally, culture's emphasis on individuality is also eroded, as Nick's letters 'fade back into the swirling patterns', portraying how nature eschews the exceptional.[14] Through the 'swirling patterns' nature's status as an active locutor is displayed for the last time, with the previously distinct forms of the letters now being lost due to neighbouring growth, concluding the novel with a final allusion to the narrative's incoherent structure. Despite this, Nick also contradicts Ghosh's theoretical schism by writing *with* trees and not harmfully inscribing onto them, allowing nature and culture to be safely intertwined by not manifesting his will to nature. Garrett Stewart comments that 'their inert logs are arrayed to log in their own message for upload to Sempervirens's orbiting camera hook-ups, of which we are not even sure Nick [. . .] is aware', emphasising the connection between Nick's remnants of human drama and the proliferation of Neelay's non-human algorithms.[15] Yet this possibly represents a shared objective between the two parties, with the human therefore having relinquished control to attempt more indirect actions that would not infringe on modern political pressures.

In conclusion, Richard Powers and Amitav Ghosh's radical questioning of the anthropocentric worldview displays a nature-centred perception, negating the idea that nature is only the setting for human drama. Powers's authorial voice diminishes this normality until it is no longer feasible, with Ghosh's work similarly refusing the idea of the climate crisis' place in the periphery, with both works serving as a reminder of nature's insurmountable dominion over humans, with the idea of human control being a mirage. Through depicting human action from a natural perspective, which is often dismissed as inconsequential, both writers address ecocritical concerns and are therefore able to perceive and critique the narcissistic ideology of the centralisation of human drama. The environment's primacy in both texts is subsequently disturbed by human infighting, but both works ultimately acknowledge humanity's reliance on nature. Overall, human drama is incapable of completely eclipsing the non-human, as the latter's lack of novelistic all-encompassing drama is set to succeed humanity for the benefit of the planet.

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Luke Bryan English Literature

Sunday Night, Monday Morning

JAY PUGH, Creative Writing

Sweeping stars from skies of glass tonight,
Hikoki, silver daughter of the isles,
Sees sunrise in suffocating white,
Sees the tortured dawn, the seething pyre.

Leaving dry bonsai and fern tonight,
Hikoki, moonlit mother of steel sons,
Smells jet fuel tainting the verdant vine,
Smells her people charred to fleeing clouds.

Citing hymns from warhead-lips tonight,
Hikoki, systematic bride of fire,
Hears the blossoms wailing in stark light,
Hears irradiated children's rhymes.

Let me be your dying wish tonight,
Hikoki, love me, when eight-fifteen comes,
In your petrochemical arms, alight,
You are the empire to my rising sun.

Jay Pugh Creative Writing