The Writing Anthology

2021

The Writing Anthology

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Dear Readers,

Welcome to the 41st edition of *The Writing Anthology.* Founded in 1981 by now-retired Central College professor Dr. Walter Cannon, *The Writing Anthology* is a collection of exceptional student work from across the liberal arts curriculum. After reviewing dozens of submissions, our team selected the following pieces for inclusion in this year's anthology. The difficulty of this selection process is a testament to the excellent quality of student writing at Central College, and we are immensely proud of all the hard work of our peers. This year, we also honor the life of Central College alumna, Renee Van Roekel. During her time at Central College, Renee left a lasting impact on her professors.

Ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus is most famous for his proclamation that "change is the only constant." He's lesser known for his more eccentric belief that fire is the origin of all things inhabiting the universe. But while unpopular, does it not resonate with us more? This past year has felt much like an inferno, all of us caught in the flames of rapid, life-altering shifts to our routine. Although sudden and devastating, such destruction brings the invaluable opportunity to start over again. That's why we are especially proud to present this anthology as the student works within it contain the very essence of positive change. Take for instance Matthew Dickinson's piece "Black Panther, Whitewashing: Colonialism and Neocolonialism Ideals in Marvel's Black Panther" or Grace Patrick-West's work "The Realm of Faeries: Queerness and Neurodivergence in Jane Eyre," which both cleverly seize this tense political moment to direct the regrowth of our blooming new normal. Or look upon Ally Madsen's mesmerizing paintings of two blue hands clasped together-- a powerful, sorely needed symbol of love after more than a year spent six feet apart from each other. Though they vary in genre and style, these collected pieces are united by the common goal of educating, persuading, and informing our healing world. Most importantly, beyond providing us with the mere hope that things will get better, the works in this anthology begin to show us how.

As times change and technology advances, so must *The Writing Anthology*. We are excited to publish *The Writing Anthology*'s first ever audio submission, in the form of a radio essay. Sarah Behren captures timeless family memories in her piece "Route 48." This piece, along with digital versions of the rest of the anthology selections and artwork, can be found at Central.edu/anthology. The website is also home to digital versions of previous anthologies, all the way back to 1990.

Each year, the John Allen Award is awarded to a piece of student writing that the selection panel deems to have superior rhetorical competence, high levels of readability, originality, and insight. This year, we are pleased to announce that Emma Chervek will receive this honor. Emma's essay "Environmental Minimalism and Inspirational Wonder in Paradise Lost" is an intriguing and inventive analysis of Milton's epic poem, as well as the very embodiment of a phoenix rising from our man-made ashes. By connecting valid environmental sustainability concerns to the skillful artistry of Milton's evergreen work, Emma inspires readers to examine their impact on their home planet. Emma's incredible command of language and astute analytical skills entrance the audience. Through her powerful insights, Emma effectively prompts us to wonder what we could do better, and subsequently rise to the challenge.

We would like to congratulate all of our student contributors and thank them for putting forward such exceptional work. Furthermore, we would like to thank all the professors who acknowledged these pieces and submitted them to our reviewing. Also, thanks are in order to Mat Kelly, Associate Professor of Art, for supplying the student art nominations. We are delighted to showcase outstanding student visual and written work together in this publication. Finally, we want to extend our gratitude to Steffanie Bonnstetter for her advising, and to Jordan Bohr and the student workers of the Central College Communications Office for their excellent work in bringing *The Writing Anthology*'s website to fruition. Above all, we would like to express our appreciation for our faculty advisors Dr. Valerie Billing and Dr. Sarah Van Waardhuizen. Thank you for your hard work, guidance, and adaptability. Again, our sincerest thanks go out to everyone who made this publication possible. We hope you enjoy the 2021 anthology!

Emma Alex Carlson '23
Gabrielle Anderson '22

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* John Allen Award Recipient

Visit **Central.edu/Anthology** to view the digital version of this year's Anthology.

You can also access the website by scanning the QR code below with a mobile device.

In memory of Renee Van Roekel

Renee Van Roekel studied at Central College for several years in pursuit of an English degree. Renee had a love for animals and had a special place in her heart for horses. Renee also struggled for many years with addiction, and on April 2, 2020, it took her life. Her family shares her fight in hopes that Renee's story will help other people with addiction seek help.

Dr. Josh Dolezal recalls Renee's freedom through poetry: "Creative writing brought out the best in Renee, because it offered a chance for her to create order out of brokenness. 'Break Away' is a lovely example of that, as it combines her knowledge of horses with her hope for the freedom they represented to her."

Dr. Mary Stark got to know Renee personally as her advisor and especially remembers her intellectual curiosity. Dr. Stark also notes, "Renee was so much more than her struggles. I enjoyed our conversations about her classes, work, and goals as well as her love and appreciation for her family, friends, and her horses. Renee was a sensitive and thoughtful person, a talented writer, and an insightful reader of literature. She was often funny and fun-loving. I will always remember her kindness."

In 2021, Central College posthumously awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree to Renee. The English Department celebrates Renee's talent by sharing her poem "Break Away."

Break Away

Renee Van Roekel

I was a horse once.
I took the bit and relished steel between my teeth,
sinewy and snake-like, I twisted my neck and snatched the reins.
Sick of being good, I felt my muscles charge
and bunch leaping around to leave her in a heap,

jumping just to see air beneath me, iron hooves clip
and nostrils flared, I snorted and my forelock swung.
I defeated silence with the rhythm of my body propelling West.
Behind me would be dust and braided tail unraveling,
but I knew because I was also the air
and the murky water who saw my reflection clear
with the almond eye that was bright with fire.
And I thundered over creeks and raced the crow
through her daddy's corn, my legs flung back and forth
and scared the pheasant up,

who I became, with the delicious break in silence by beating wings
and frantic fluttering of the gentle heart I know.
I'm alive, looking at this perfect hoof print by the pond.
I was the horse, the air, the water and the pheasant.

I was not pursued.

A Flight into Liberal Arts Education

Grace Helgeson ***LAS 110: Intersections***

Grace took a highly creative approach to her Liberal Arts Conversation paper in LAS 110. The assignment was to stage a conversation among the student and several writers from our unit on the liberal arts. The story Grace wrote is enjoyable in its own right, and she does a lovely job of weaving in evidence from her sources using paraphrases and footnotes. She clearly expresses the points of agreement and disagreement among the authors and imagines a true intellectual conversation.

-Valerie Billing

The doors open and the flight attendant's voice rolls over the intercom,
"Boarding now first-class passengers."

I wait patiently for her to call my boarding class as I flip through the novel Supermarket by Logic, but my mind seems too distracted to focus on the intensity of the pages in front of me. She calls zone three, and I stand up from the seat I was slouching in. I walk towards the attendant's desk and let her scan my plane ticket. She scans the ticket and clears me to board the plane. Strolling through the tunnel to the plane doors I read over my ticket that states seat B23. I walk down the right side of the plane through the narrow aisle to find row B. I then realize my misfortune as I peer at my seat, one of four seats centered in between the two aisles. I sigh softly and toss my carry-on into the cabinet above my head and take my seat.

"Hello dearie," an older woman says as she nears the row of seats.
I immediately stand to help her with her luggage. She sits in the seat next to me marked B24 and we both relax into the middle of the plane. I usually love flying when I am regularly seated next to the window, but today I am seated in the center. I pull out Supermarket again in an attempt to read as I see an older man with scruffy gray hair and glasses stopping to peer at his plane ticket.

"I believe this is my seat," he announces, peering at me and the older woman on my right.
The woman scrambles to stand and introduces herself to the man, I follow to do the same, feeling a little timid and unmannered.

"Hello, my name is Eleanor Roosevelt," She says, shaking his hand.
I feel a bit uncomfortable as they shake hands; I struggle to introduce myself politely.

"Hi, my name is Grace Helgeson," I say reaching my hand out towards him.
He shakes my hand strongly, almost in a professional manner.

"Hello, I'm William," he nods towards our handshake.

I take my seat as he packs his luggage and takes his seat next to mine. At this time, the plane is filling up quickly with other passengers and the growing sound of conversation. Other passengers fill the seats surrounding us as a small infant cries; my chair jolts as a mother and toddler sit behind me. The plane is almost at capacity as an elderly woman with short dark hair hurries to her seat, purse in hand, and sits next to Eleanor.

"Hello, my name is William Cronon," the man sitting next to me says leaning forward to shake her hand. I thought it was oddly formal that he felt the need to introduce himself but I enjoyed the comforting atmosphere.

"I'm Adrienne Rich," she responded in a sweet tone.

I suppose it was nice to have some familiarity in such a small row of seats. I relax back into my seat and push my headphones into my ears. I skim through a playlist on my phone as the seat-buckle sign lights up. I close my eyes and plop a piece of mint gum into my mouth preparing for take-off. I felt the movement of William next to me. I opened my eyes to see him pull out a book from his briefcase which was shoved between the back of the chair in front of him and his feet. He acquired a book titled Intersections: An Introduction to the Liberal Arts.

"Oh a Liberal Arts book, how wonderful!" Eleanor exclaims from beside me.
I was surprised at first that I wasn't the only one noticing William's book.

"You know, a liberal education is not something any of us ever achieve," William says peering at a page in the book (10).

"How so?" Eleanor says pressing her hand to her chin.

"In fact a liberal arts education is not a state, rather it is a way of living in the face of ignorance," William says as he leans forward speaking to Eleanor.[1]

My mind attempts to wrap around the words that came out of his mouth. They were so powerful and well-spoken that I contemplated saying something professional in response, but what came out of my mouth was, "What exactly is a liberal arts education?" My attention turns towards Adrienne as she leaned forward past Eleanor to speak.

"I want to suggest that there is more essential experience past our education that you owe to yourself, one which depends on you, in all interactions with yourself and the world," she announces.[2]

"Exactly Adrienne,
I agree that a liberal arts education aspires to nurture the growth of human talent in the service of human freedom," he responds.[3]

Thinking about my own education and my attendance at Central College back in Iowa, a liberal arts institution, I thought that maybe this conversation could use my younger insight.

"William, I agree, but I think modern times call for a new emphasis," I say turning towards him. "Why do you think that many students today don't choose or understand the importance of a Liberal Arts Education?"

But now sitting in this turbulent plane and listening to this conversation, I am beginning to question what the meaning of a liberal arts education really is. Can it be more than what I thought?

William goes to speak but Eleanor interrupts before he gets the chance to respond,

"Perhaps because there are so many books and the branches of knowledge in which we can learn facts are so multitudinous today, we begin to hear more frequently that the function of education is to give children a desire to learn and to teach them how to use their minds and where to go to acquire facts when their curiosity is aroused."[4]

"Isn't that what education is about?" I say, feeling my eyebrows cross in confusion.

"Not always, Grace. A liberal education means more than just literal knowledge, it's a responsibility to yourself," Adrienne adds in. "It's the responsibility you hold to yourself in not allowing others to do your thinking and reusing to fall for easy and shallow solutions to real problems."[5]

I believed that education just meant education, and that was what "students" were supposed to do. But now sitting in this turbulent plane and listening to this conversation, I am beginning to question what the meaning of a liberal arts education really is. Can it be more than what I thought?

"I'd like to add that it is also about freedom," William remarks, "Freedom in the sense of making a difference in the world around you."

"William, that is a brilliant idea, I think that along

1 Cronon 16
2 Rich 7
3 Cronon 12
4 Roosevelt
5 Rich 9

with freedom comes service and civic duty," Eleanor announces, "As citizens economic problems will often claim our attention, and the power to understand them is essential to wise solutions."[6]

"I never thought about it in that sense Eleanor," I spoke quietly towards her. "Considering in today's society economic and political problems seem to have a big impact, I agree that being taught to think about all of these important issues really means more in our education." And just like that, listening to them speak about different viewpoints of what my own education means, a light bulb went off in my head.

"This conversation is a heavy one," I declare as they simultaneously all nod in agreement.

"I'd like to add, Grace, that a liberal arts education also made a breaking point for women as well," Adrienne says speaking around Eleanor. "A liberal arts education taught me as a young girl to resist the forces in society which say that women should be nice, play safe, have low professional expectations, drown in love and forget about work."[7]

"Adrienne, I understand exactly what you mean; when I was younger I suppose my own education was fairly typical, and I confess with some shame that at the age of twenty, when asked by an Englishwoman how our government functioned, I was as completely floored as if she had asked me to describe the political events on the moon!" Eleanor said laughing as she spoke.[8]

The plane began to rock in turbulence as I thought about my own education as a woman. I tried to put my own feet into the shoes of Eleanor and Adrienne in the history of education. Honestly, it was hard to even imagine a time when women and girls didn't understand the political system or strive for high-paying jobs. My parents have always raised me to work hard and dream big, and that is what a liberal arts education means to me.

"I never thought of it that way," I say. "I think that I was never truly aware of the privilege I've had coming from my own generation, and the opportunities I've had because women of the past have paved the way for me to receive a full education."

"The liberally educated understand that they belong to a community whose well being is crucial to helping the community flourish by making other's successes possible," William says, disrupting my train of thought.[9]

I could tell that he didn't have much to add in connection to the women's movement, but I enjoyed his addition to the conversation.

"I just hope by the end of my own education that I will be as wise as you three," I say smiling as I pick up my book again.

I could tell the conversation was ending, but their words lingered in the air surrounding us. I'd like to imagine the words floating around the plane, bouncing against the ceiling and floor until they magically made their way into another person's mind. I felt young in this plane, sitting next to who I thought had to be the wisest human beings. I felt thriving as I felt their words inspire me somewhere deep in my soul. I could still feel the strong tone of Adrienne's voice ringing in my ears and the softness of Eleanor's voice. William, on the other hand, did not linger in my ears, but I still felt some recognition of his perspective.

The plane suddenly took a downward tilt. I peered past William's shoulders to the nearest window and watched the clouds turn into a blur of white and blue. We shuddered to a halting stop and I waited patiently for the passengers to clear the plane. William was the first to reach the aisle, then Eleanor, lastly Adrienne.

6 Roosevelt
7 Rich 7
8 Roosevelt 7
9 Cronon 15

I stooped down to grab my book which had fallen to the floor during the landing. As I reached my hand down to grab the smooth cover of my book, my hand fell upon something much thinner and wider than my book.

I pulled the object out and my eyes read: *Intersections: An Introduction to the Liberal Arts.*

I walked down the aisle to reach William and return the book but he was too far gone. For some reason, I felt the urge to open the front cover, and to my astonishment, there was writing on the inside of the cover. It read:

"Grace, may this book be your guide to a liberal arts education and your wings to freedom."

I couldn't help but smile as I stepped off the plane and walked to the luggage gate.

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Ally Madsen, 8" diameter, acrylic

Birth Control: From Lab to Market

Katie Wang ***Chem 425: Advanced Topics in Biochemistry: Medicinal Chemistry***

Katie is majoring in Biochemistry and Spanish. She wrote this last spring as part of our Advanced Topics in Biochemistry: Medicinal Chemistry. For this assignment, students were tasked with writing an 8-10 page literature review on a contemporary topic related to medicinal chemistry using the Journal of Medicinal Chemistry as a template. They were given some leeway on how to cover the topic (as a review), but it needed to include some context, synthetic components, pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics.

-James Shriver

I. Introduction

Between the years 2015 and 2017, a national survey conducted in the United States found that 64.9% of 72.2 million women used contraception. Of those women, the second most utilized form of contraception was an oral contraceptive pill. The only form of birth control which exceeded the use of the pill was female sterilization.[1] Based on this data, it was clear that when it came to reversible contraceptives, the pill was the form most heavily depended on. Although birth control is now considered an "essential medicine," the need for the pill was not always recognized nor prioritized.[2]

One woman in particular pushed for the development of the birth control pill. She felt women should have control of their bodies, especially when it came to pregnancy. This woman, Margaret Sanger, was a reproductive rights activist who founded the American Birth Control League--now known as the Planned Parenthood Federation.[3] Upon meeting biologist Gregory Pincus in 1950, she asked him to develop a cheap, dependable and reversible form of oral contraception. Nine years later, the first birth control pill was approved by the FDA, fundamentally changing the available methods of reversible contraception.[4] [5]

II. Pharmacodynamics

In the female reproductive system, various hormones are at work to stimulate ovulation. First, the hypothalamus releases gonadotropin releasing hormone (GnRH) to the anterior pituitary gland located in the brain. When this occurs, the anterior pituitary is stimulated to release the follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH) and the luteinizing hormone (LH).[6] Both hormones target the ovaries and stimulate ovulation. When a woman is not ovulating, her ovaries are releasing estrogen and progesterone. These hormones act to prepare the body for and to maintain pregnancy.[7] Additionally, these hormones travel through the blood to the hypothalamus and anterior pituitary. When progesterone and estrogen reach these glands, they inhibit the release of GnRH, LH and FSH so ovulation cannot occur. If the levels of progesterone and estrogen drop, the hypothalamus and anterior pituitary are then allowed to release the necessary hormones to stimulate ovulation.[6] A diagram of the cycle can be found in Figure I.

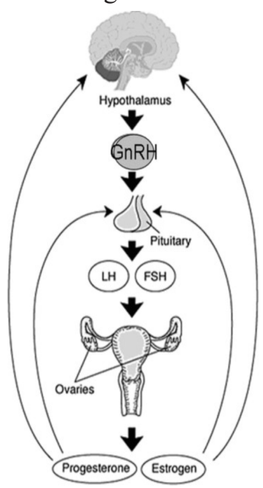

Figure I. The female reproductive hormone cycle.8

When a woman begins to take birth control, she is introducing synthetic forms of progesterone and estrogen into her system. In the same way that natural progesterone and estrogen work, these synthetic hormones target the hypothalamus and anterior pituitary to prevent the release of GnRH, LH and FSH.[6] Essentially, the brain begins to believe that the body is pregnant and ovulation is inhibited.[3]

III. Synthesizing Progesterone

Russell Marker

One of the key ingredients in birth control is the steroid hormone progesterone. Prior to 1944, progesterone was extracted from animals in low concentrations and required a long purification process before it could be used. Due to these complications, the cost of one gram of the hormone was around $200. To find more potent forms of progesterone, Russell Marker turned to plants and discovered the steroid diosgenin. Although structurally different to progesterone, the chemist was able to convert diosgenin into progesterone with a 60% yield.3 The synthesis can be found in Figure II.

Once Marker determined progesterone could be synthesized from plant steroids, he searched for plants with more abundant sources of diosgenin. Most plants contained little to no diosgenin, except for a wild yam found in Mexico. With a source and procedure, the price of progesterone dropped to $80 a gram. In the years to come, concurrent with the finding of a Mexican yam with roots ten times richer in diosgenin, the price of progesterone was cut down to $1.75 a gram.[3] [10] Upon these discoveries, the active ingredient in birth control was both easily accessible and reasonably priced.

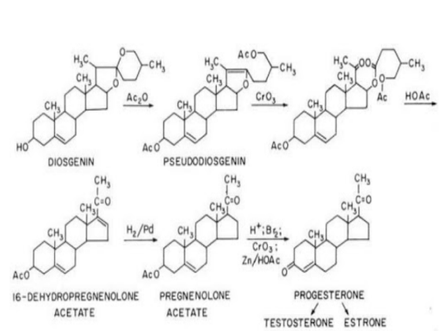

Figure II. Synthesis of progesterone from diosgenin.9

Gregory Pincus

In the 1930s, several animal experiments indicated that ovulation could be inhibited with daily injections of progesterone. Following this work, Gregory Pincus and his associate Min-Chueh Chang conducted experiments on rabbits and rats, utilizing progesterone as a form of contraception. Quickly, they were able to develop a hormone regimen which prevented pregnancy.[3] At around the same time, a professor named John Rock was trying to use progesterone and estrogen as a method of curing infertility. Since both hormones are present during pregnancy, Rock's idea was to produce a pseudo state of pregnancy in an attempt to make patients more susceptible to pregnancy.7 During the trial, 80 infertile women received hormone treatments; after the trial, 14 women became pregnant. Interestingly, none of the participants were able to become pregnant during the trial.[3]

After meeting in 1951, Pincus and Rock began working together to produce the perfect combination of hormone to administer to patients. One idea was to completely remove estrogen and simply inject progesterone into patients. Although this method proved effective, patients experienced unpleasant side effects such as breakthrough bleeding (bleeding or spotting experienced between normal menstrual periods). By reincorporating estrogen, even in a small dose, bleeding from the uterus was inhibited.[7] Upon this discovery, Pincus and Rock had the necessary information to inhibit ovulation and prevent pregnancy. Despite having this knowledge, there was one major setback. The only way

to administer the necessary hormones to prevent pregnancy was through injection. Although possible, this method was not preferable. Instead, they needed an orally active form of the hormone progesterone.[4]

Carl Djerassi

When synthetically made from plants, progesterone must be given via an injection. If ingested orally, the hormone is either destroyed by stomach acid and enzymes, or it gets stuck in the intestines and cannot reach the blood.[6] [10] Original attempts to chemically alter the structure of progesterone so it could be taken orally, diminished the biological activity of the hormone.[11] In 1951, a chemist named Carl Djerassi was able to synthesize the first orally active progesterone: 19-nor-17α-ethynyltestosterone, or norethindrone.

In the early 1940s, the chemist Maximilian Ehrenstein published an article describing how an impure form of 19-norprogesterone had an increase in biological activity when tested in rabbits.[10] [11] Inspired by the work, Djerassi began focusing on replacing the methyl group at the 19 position with hydrogen. A modified Birch reduction resulted in the desired product, 19-norprogesterone (Figure III).[12] When tested biologically in rabbits, the modified hormone proved to be 4-8 times as active as the natural hormone.11 Although the hormone could be modified to increase activity, it was still not orally active.

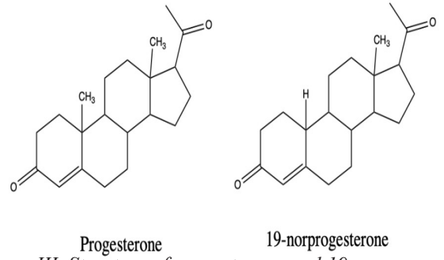

Figure III. Structure of progesterone and 19-norprogesterone.

In 1938, a chemistry group at Schering A.G. in Berlin demonstrated that the addition of an acetylene group at position 17 of the sex hormone testosterone not only made the hormone orally active but also changed its biological activity. The hormone now had low progestational activity.[10] [11] Combining the two methods of adding an acetylene group and removing a methyl group from testosterone, Djerassi was able to synthesize 19-nor-17α-ethynyltestosterone, or norethindrone, an orally active form of progesterone (Figure IV).

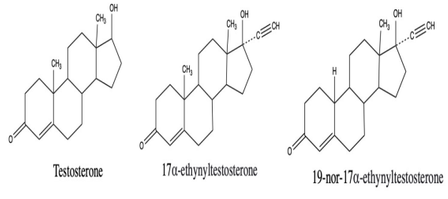

Figure IV. Structure of testosterone, 17a-ethynyltestosterone and 19-nor-17a-ethynyltestosterone.

Further Developments

Over time, several other orally active progesterones have been developed. The original pill contained the compounds norethindrone and norethynodrel. Although effective, these synthesized hormones were not selective and could interact with other androgen receptors, resulting in unwanted side effects.[6] To increase selectivity for progesterone receptors, so as to reduce side effects, other synthetic progesterones like levonorgestrel, desogestrel and norgestimate were developed.[2] Now, there are about ten different synthetically made progesterones found in various birth control pills, as well as two different forms of estrogen.[6] Although structurally different, all forms of progesterone act in the same way so as to inhibit ovulation as a way of preventing pregnancy.

IV. Finalizing Steps

Animal Trials

In the 1930s, rats and rabbits were injected with various combinations of hormones. Based on the results of these trials, it was determined that high levels of estrogen could prevent pregnancy.[3] [13] Pincus himself began animal trials to further understand the necessary hormone concentrations needed to inhibit ovulation. Based on his results, it was progesterone, not estrogen, that was necessary to prevent pregnancy. Once Pincus had produced a hormone regimen which worked well for rabbits and rats, he was ready to test his method on humans.[13]

Clinical Trials

Original human trials were conducted by Rock who was focused on curing infertility. By suggestion of Pincus, Rock varied hormone concentration and administration.[3] When Rock's infertility trials were over, the pair began clinical trials on a larger scale with 60 patients from Free Hospital. While none of the patients became pregnant during the trial, over half of the participants chose to withdraw due to unpleasant side effects.[13] These side effects included breast tenderness, weight gain, increased blood pressure and mood swings, all of which are also indicative of pregnancy.[4] Frustrated with their inability to keep patients in the trial, Pincus and Rock turned to women in a Massachusetts asylum, Worcester State Hospital. While working there, they started hormone therapy on 16 patients. Although none of the patients dropped out, they experienced similar unpleasant side effects as the women in the original trial. In 1955, Pincus and Rock began to branch out and started clinical trials in Puerto Rico. They first started with 20 medical students at the University of Puerto Rico. Similar to their previous trials, half of the participants dropped out due to side effects.[5] Next, the pair turned to women living in Rio Piedras, a poor neighborhood in San Juan. In total, 265 women were selected to trial their birth control pill. Of these 265 women, 22% of them dropped out due to side effects. Although this was an improvement, the numbers were still significantly high. Further studies were conducted in Puerto Rico, Mexico and Haiti until finally, birth control was approved by the FDA.[13]

The first clinical trials had similar issues. Women would not continue treatment because of unpleasant side effects. Although the drug was effective, women did not want to experience constant nausea, dizziness, vomiting, headaches and breakthrough bleeding. One reason for such unpleasant side effects was because of the dosage of progestin. On average, patients were receiving 10 mg a day.[5] Today, the highest dosage of progestin available in birth control is less than 1 mg. Given the clear difference in dosages, it is no wonder women were not willing to continue treatment.

FDA Approval

G.D. Searle Co. was the first company to manufacture a birth control pill.[3] This pill was called Enovid and it received FDA approval in 1957. Although Enovid was FDA approved, the drug could only be used as treatment for infertility and menstrual irregularities.[5] It was not until 1959 that Enovid received FDA approval to act as a form of contraception. Following the approval of Enovid, another pharmaceutical company called Syntex began manufacturing their own birth control pill.[4] By 1970, seven separate drug companies had received FDA approval to distribute birth control pills and about 9 million American women were using oral contraceptives.[2]

V. Conclusion

In nine short years, the birth control pill went from an idea requested by Margaret Sanger, to a drug which revolutionized the world both medicinally and socially. Still today, varying methods of reversible contraception are being developed to minimize side effects, maximize efficiency and modify mode of deliverance.

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No se espera que seamos buenas en física

Katie Wang ***Span 342: Modern Spanish American Literature***

The assignment was to choose one of the authors that we had studied in class and, after reading more examples of their work and researching their lives and experiences, write a story/poem/drama in the style of that author. The students then had to write a paper explaining and analyzing their own work. Katie's poem "No se espera que seamos buenas en física" is an early 21st century take on the style and themes of early 20th century Argentine poet, Alfonsina Storni. What I find most compelling about Katie's work is the fact that Katie, a young woman of today, can identify with a young woman from a century ago in a different country and continent. Katie chose Alfonsina Storni because she saw in Storni's experience, as a woman in a male-dominated world of strict societal norms, a similarity to her own experience as a present-day woman in the STEM fields. And who knew that early 20th century Latin American poetry could relate to physics?! It is a well-written poem and paper which come from a personal experience and a timely topic.

-Allison Krogstad

Es fácil de notar.
De 25 estudiantes,
solo 2 otras se parecen a mí.
Las 3 llamamos la atención
sin querer.
No se espera que comprendamos
las fuerzas.
No se espera que entendamos
la aceleración.
No se espera que seamos buenas en física.

Nos mantenemos unidas.
De siete grupos de laboratorio,
se destaca un grupo.
Comprobamos cada tarea
entre nosotras
una vez por semana.
Pasamos horas estudiando el contenido
Porque no se espera que seamos buenas en física.

Queremos ser
doctoras.
Queremos ser
ingenieras.
Pero no se espera que comprendamos
las conversiones de energía.
No se espera que entendamos
los circuitos.
No se espera que seamos buenas en física.

En un semestre,
Hay dos exámenes.
Después de cada examen
el profesor nos dice
cuáles son las notas más altas.
Las notas más altas
son de nosotras.

De 25 estudiantes,
Somos las 3.
No se espera que seamos buenas en física.
No se supone que seamos buenas en física.
Sin embargo,
nosotras somos.

La explicación de "No se espera que seamos buenas en física"

"No se espera que seamos buenas en física" es un poema que hace un comentario sobre las expectativas de la sociedad sobre las mujeres. Este poema fue escrito al estilo de Alfonsina Storni, una importante escritora de la literatura hispanoamericana. En muchas de sus obras, Storni hace comentarios sobre la sociedad, especialmente sobre los estereotipos de mujeres. Este artículo analiza cómo "No se espera que seamos buenas en física" es similar y diferente a los trabajos de Storni.

Alfonsina Storni fue una poeta nacida el 29 de mayo de 1892 en Suiza. Cuando era niña, Storni se mudó a Argentina con su familia ("Biografía de Alfonsina Storni"). A la edad de doce años, Storni empezó a escribir poemas. El primer poema que escribió Storni fue para su madre y hablaba de los aspectos negativos del mundo para una mujer (López). Incluso desde una edad temprana, Storni no estaba de acuerdo con el papel de la mujer en la sociedad.

A principios del siglo 20, el papel de la mujer en la sociedad era muy diferente de hoy. En general, se esperaba que las mujeres se casaran, tuvieran hijos y cuidaran a sus hijos y a su esposo. Normalmente, no tenían trabajos ni ningún otro propósito que ser la esposa y madre perfecta. A pesar de estas expectativas, Storni fue diferente. Cuando tenía veinte años, Storni tuvo un hijo sin esposo (Pozzi). En ese tiempo, según las leyes argentinas, una mujer que tenía un hijo sin estar casada, no podía intentar heredar los bienes del padre (Giordano). Para cuidar a su hijo, Storni empezó a trabajar como escritora y periodista

Jaden Culbertson, 4' x 4' mixed media

(Pozzi). Es a través de sus luchas como madre soltera y mujer en un campo dominado por los hombres que Storni encontró inspiración para sus trabajos.

Muchas de las obras de Storni tienen un tono feminista. Ella habla sobre las expectativas imposibles y la situación ridícula de la mujer en la sociedad (Chang-Rodríguez and Filer 345). Al principio de su carrera, las obras de Storni muestran la perspectiva de las mujeres pero con el tiempo, los poemas se vuelven más cínicos e irónicos. Ella empieza a expresarse de manera más mordaz con respecto a los hombres (López). Esto se puede ver en la diferencia de tono entre "La inquietud del rosal" y "Tú me quieres blanca" o "Hombre pequeñito." En la primera obra, Storni critica la expectativa de que las mujeres necesitan tener hijos al decir que, en la prisa por cumplir con las expectativas femeninas tales como tener hijos, las mujeres pierden la capacidad de conocerse y de vivir. En este trabajo, Storni está reflexionando sobre la sociedad en general. En otros poemas escritos más tarde como "Tú me quieres blanca" y "Hombre pequeñito", Storni tiene una voz feminista que parece estar enojada con los hombres. Storni comienza a reflexionar sobre cómo los hombres no son perfectos pero esperan la perfección en sus esposas. También empieza a degradar a los hombres por llamarlos "pequeños" y decir que ellos son incapaces de entender a una mujer. Aunque el estilo de Storni cambió con el tiempo, ella siempre tenía un tema feminista en sus obras.

En mi poema "No se espera que seamos buenas en física" hay un tema similar. El

poema trata sobre la experiencia de una mujer en su clase de física. De 25 estudiantes, ella es una de tres mujeres. En la sociedad de hoy, existe una gran brecha en el número de hombres y mujeres que trabajan en los campos de la ciencia, la tecnología, la ingeniería y las matemáticas, o CTIM. Las mujeres representan solo 29.3% de los trabajadores en el campo CTIM. Esta brecha empieza con los estereotipos y expectativas de la sociedad para las mujeres ("Women in STEM: Quick Take"). Aunque no existen reglas que dicen que las mujeres no pueden trabajar en el campo CTIM, hay expectativas sociales de que las mujeres deben hacer "trabajo de mujeres" para cuidar mejor a la familia. Incluso cuando las mujeres ingresan al campo, a menudo se enfrentan a la discriminación. En general, es más probable que las mujeres dejen el campo CTIM que los hombres porque son ignoradas, aisladas, pagadas menos y empujadas a la periferia, especialmente si son madres ("Women in STEM: Quick Take"). Aunque esto es un mejoramiento con respecto al tiempo de Storni, no es lo suficientemente bueno. Las mujeres no deben afrontar discriminación en el campo CTIM o las estereotipos de la sociedad. Si Storni estuviera viva, se sentiría frustrada con el trato a las mujeres. Basado en los pensamientos y los temas de sus obras, creo que Storni también querría la igualdad entre hombres y mujeres en el campo CTIM.

"No se espera que seamos buenas en física" fue escrito de una manera que imita el estilo y los temas de Storni. En el poema, la narradora habla de la expectativa de que las mujeres no comprendan los conceptos de física. La narradora está contemplando la situación de su clase de física y cómo las mujeres de su clase rompen la expectativa. Aunque las mujeres no "deberían" comprender la materia, ellas son algunas de las mejores estudiantes. Esto es similar al tema de Storni de que las "mujeres [son] intelectuales y más equilibradas" que lo que piensa la sociedad (López). En sus libros *El dulce daño, Irremediablemente y Languidez,* este tema es evidente en la manera en que Storni ejemplifica su frustración con los estereotipos de las mujeres. En general, el mensaje de mi poema, al igual que los trabajos de Storni, es que las mujeres en el mundo pueden hacer cosas difíciles, a pesar de la falta del apoyo de la sociedad.

En general, "No se espera que seamos buenas en física" tiene más en común con las obras tempranas de Storni que los poemas más tardes. El poema es un reflejo de la sociedad como "La inquietud del rosal". La narradora no habla de manera negativa o cínica de los hombres como en "Hombre pequeñito" pero hay un sentimiento triste en la escritura (Storni). Cuando ella mira alrededor de su clase, puede ver que es parte de la minoría. Excepto por otras dos, ella está sola. Al final, la emoción cambia a un sentimiento de esperanza. En el poema, las mujeres están rompiendo las reglas de la sociedad por estar en una clase no tradicional y tener éxito. En "La inquietud del rosal", las mujeres están siguiendo las reglas de la sociedad y pierden su vida a los niños (Storni). Aunque "La inquietud del rosal" tiene un mensaje y emoción en general diferente que "No se espera que seamos buenas en física", el uso de la poesía para comentar sobre la sociedad es igual.

Otra similitud entre "No se espera que seamos buenas en física" y las obras de Storni es el uso de la repetición como recurso poético. En "Tú me quieres blanca" y "Cuadrados y ángulos", Storni usa la repetición para enfatizar el mensaje del poema. Específicamente, la repetición en cada poema es el comentario que quiere hacer sobre la sociedad. En "Tú me quieres blanca", Storni critica las expectativas ridículas de perfección de las mujeres. Ella repite la frase "tú me quieres blanca" para mostrar que en la sociedad, los hombres quieren una mujer inocente, perfecta o blanca (Di Verso). Luego en "Cuadrados y ángulos", Storni habla de la falta de originalidad en la sociedad. Ella repite

"cuadrados y ángulos" para crear un efecto visual porque quiere hacer un punto más fuerte. Storni quiere que los lectores comprenden que, en su opinión, toda la sociedad es igual. Nadie quiere ser diferente porque hay presión de la sociedad para ser perfecto. De manera similar, en "No se espera que seamos buenas en física", la frase "no se espera que" es repetida para enfatizar que la sociedad no cree que las mujeres puedan hacerlo. El uso de la repetición es una manera de asegurar que el lector comprende el mensaje.

La semejanza final entre las obras es el uso del encabalgamiento. En los poemas de Storni como "Peso ancestral" y "Hombre pequeñito", ella utiliza el encabalgamiento como forma de mantener la fluidez en su trabajo. Al no completar la oración en un verso, Storni obliga al lector a continuar leyendo. De manera similar, en "No se espera que seamos buenas en física", el uso del encabalgamiento, específicamente en las líneas 19-20, 21-22 y 39-40, crea la necesidad de seguir leyendo. El lector quiere completar la idea y tiene que continuar leyendo para hacerlo.

El poema "No se espera que seamos buenas en física" es una obra escrita al estilo de Alfonsina Storni. Como un comentario y una reflexión de las expectativas de la sociedad, el tema del trabajo es similar a las primeras obras de Storni. Además, el uso de recursos poéticos como la repetición y el encabalgamiento hacen que este poema es similar a las obras de Storni. Aunque existen diferencias en las emociones y los temas exactos de los trabajos, la voz feminsita subyacente en ambos hace que "No se espera que seamos buenas en física" sea similar al estilo de las obras de Storni. El objetivo de Storni, y el objetivo mío, es crear obras que hagan que los lectores reflexionen sobre las expectativas, los estereotipos y el tratamiento de las mujeres en la sociedad.

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Black Panther, Whitewashing: Colonialism and Neocolonialism Ideals in Marvel's Black Panther

Matthew Dickinson ***LAS 410: Disney-Fication***

Matthew wrote this paper for LAS 410 A (The Disney-fication of Identities, Representations and Development). The assignment was to write a critical analysis paper analyzing a Disney artifact (film, TV show, theme park etc.) based on a theme from the course that makes an argument about why studying these images/environments are important. Matthew's analysis of *Black Panther* makes a strong argument for how the film, despite being celebrated for its representation of people who are Black both behind and in front of the camera, nevertheless perpetuates colonialist and neocolonialist values. Matthew includes in-depth analysis of specific examples from the film, and also demonstrates implications of whitewashing this particular film. His understanding and use of organizing terms such as colonial and neocolonial is impressive, and the timeliness of this film makes his analysis especially interesting and important for his peers to read.

-Shelley Bradfield

In recent years, the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) has provided some of the most popular and influential superhero movies. Starting with *Iron Man* in 2008, the MCU has generated massive revenue while also pushing the boundaries of the oft-maligned superhero genre and kept up with DC Comics, their main competitors. One such revolutionary film is *Black Panther,* which was released in 2018. The movie was especially significant since it was the first Marvel film to feature a Black lead and predominantly Black cast. Additionally, the movie featured an African setting and a soundtrack featuring traditional African-style music with contributions from contemporary music stars such as Kendrick Lamar, Travis Scott, and The Weeknd. *Black Panther* proved successful commercially and critically, grossing over a billion dollars and winning numerous awards--including three Academy Awards and a Best Film nomination, the first for a superhero film at the Awards.

While the movie generally shows a commitment to representing Black American and African culture, some plot elements endorse colonial and neocolonial values. According to Buescher & Ono (1996), colonialism happens when one country takes over another territory and steals resources, land, and culture from the conquered place with little to no regard for its residents or sovereignty. While colonialism still happens today, its roots are often based in historical contexts such as the British Empire and the exploits of Alexander the Great. In contrast, neocolonialism works to "cover up" unsavory parts of colonial histories and present a new interpretation of events that reinforces colonialist ideals of superiority and inferiority. These narratives are especially harmful when they become part of the mainstream media and reinforce negative ideals in popular culture.

The Walt Disney Company acquired Marvel in 2009, and thus *Black Panther* was produced under the gaze of the media giant, even if it did not have an outsized impact on production. Disney has had issues with fairly portraying cultures outside of the white hegemonic lifestyles that many of their top producers come from. These shortcomings perpetuate and justify the physical and cultural devastation that ravaged many different indigenous countries and cultures in the name of securing land and resources for European and United States powers, who were led by predominantly wealthy white men. This literal and figurative whitewashing makes truly

acknowledging historical events nearly impossible, or, even worse, repackages them in a way that justifies the bloodshed, rape, and cultural degradation of once-thriving countries and communities.

Black Panther is not immune to the problematic elements that can be found in more "traditional" Disney classics, and, in fact, promotes colonialist and neocolonialist values. Colonialism proves to be a major plot device throughout the movie, as many of the plot points include direct or indirect references to the pain and suffering caused by hundreds of years of oppression for Black Americans and Africans. However, neocolonialist values seep into the film through the characters M'Baku, leader of a rival tribe who challenges the main character T'Challa for the title of Black Panther, and the larger role for Agent Ross, a white male CIA operative. Through its mostly ineffectual attempts to highlight the problems with colonialism, endorsement of neocolonial ideals, and inability to allow a Black colonizer to be shown in a positive light, *Black Panther* espouses many of the problematic ideologies shown in Disney films, while also adding a few colonial twists specific to the film.

Sarahi Ledesma, glass

Colonialism Through Portrayals of Wakanda

From the beginning of the film, the main setting of Wakanda deals with the effects of colonialism through isolationism. In a storybook-type opening, the origin of the mysterious African nation is told, with stories of tribal wars, a powerful element named Vibranium, and an ancient warrior consuming the Heart Shaped Herb, which gave him supernatural abilities and made him the first king and Black Panther, "the protector of Wakanda" (*Black Panther*, 2018). Later on in the introduction, the audience learns that the nation chose to "hide in plain sight" amidst the chaos happening in the outside world (*Black Panther*, 2018). Although colonialism is not explicitly mentioned, images of slave ships, tanks, and planes suggest that the Wakandans were aware of the dangers that surrounded them. As a result, the residents chose isolationism, or not being involved in world affairs, "to keep Vibranium safe" (*Black Panther*, 2018).

Since the Wakandans knew that the element was a resource that gave them a great technological edge over other nations, they decided to avoid the colonialists that would doubtlessly come to pillage their greatest asset and overthrow their carefully preserved way of life. In just a few minutes of screentime,

the colonialist themes of the film are on full display.

In the film itself, the general conception of Wakanda by the outside world shows the nation as a primitive third-world country that needs help from more developed countries. Collste (2019) notes that "enduring social relations of the superior and subordinate has a tendency to create images of the Other and of oneself, and these images are shared by both the superior and the subordinate" (2). This phenomenon, known as epistemic injustice, causes ideas of superiority and inferiority in both affected cultures, which often comes as a result of a colonialist history. While Wakanda itself has not been colonized by the traditional European or Western powers, the ideals of how they relate to the outside world, in comparison to other African countries, remain.

The most harrowing example of epistemic injustice happens during the capture and questioning of Ulysses Klaue, a lowlife weapons dealer and secondary antagonist. After T'Challa tracks him down and removes the villain's prosthetic arm that doubles as a cannon and exposes its Vibranium contents, he angrily asks him where the weapon came from. In response, Klaue retorts, "you savages [the Wakandans] didn't deserve it" (*Black Panther*, 2018). Even though the pejorative word "savage" has ties to Native Americans for most audiences, Africans have also been subjected to the term that implies they are less than human and in need of salvation and reform (Asante, 2013; Stam & Spence, 1983). This defiant and racist response to a powerful ruler who has the powers of his elders coursing through his veins and technological advancements that are greater than any in the world shows the feelings of superiority that define epistemic injustice, even though the villain knows the Wakandans' power better than any outsider.

In the interrogation itself, Klaue asserts to Agent Ross, a White male CIA operative, that he "shouldn't trust the Wakandans" and that he "is much more [Ross's] speed" (*Black Panther*, 2018). When he is speaking to a fellow White male, the villain uses a more coded approach to justifying colonial ideals by suggesting that he is more trustworthy than the Black Africans Ross is currently with. After this move fails, Klaue asks the agent what he truly knows about Wakanda. After Ross replies "Shepards, textiles, cool outfits," referencing the third world status the Wakandans show to the outside world, the villain fills him in on how powerful Vibranium truly is. Klaue likens the country to the fabled El Dorado, a magical place chock full of gold that Spanish conquistadors searched for in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries (Cartwright, 2014). By connecting this colonialist tale to the real nation of Wakanda, Klaue again attempts to capitalize on white superiority to convince the agent that he should side with him and steal the ultra powerful Vibranium from the inferior Wakandans. Ross dismisses this argument out of hand, leaving Klaue alone and rejoining T'Challa and Okoye.

Gorillas and Guns: Neocolonialist Values in the Film

While Klaue's overtly colonialist rhetoric gets lambasted, portrayals of Wakanda elsewhere in the film betray neocolonialist ideologies. Historically, media representations of Africa and African life have "othered" this continent and its culture (Asante, 2013; Bonsu, 2009; Stam & Spence, 1983). As a result, a great deal of regressive views about what Africa looks like today have seeped into the minds of audiences across the world, especially in so-called first world countries such as the United States. While these representations may be misguided, ideologies such as neocolonialism can have a dangerous influence on how historical events are remembered. Buescher & Ono (1996) note that "neocolonialism is contemporary culture's willful blindness to the historical legacy of colonialism enacted in the present" (130). While Wakanda itself does not suffer under colonialism in the film, certain aspects of colonialist actions are swept under the rug or are barely mentioned. Although *Black Panther* makes great strides in presenting African culture in a positive light, the film still leans on stereotypical ideals of tribalism and "othering" to show why the advanced Wakandan culture needs colonialism to reach their full potential.

The mysterious Jabari tribe and Agent Ross are the main ways that neocolonialism inserts itself into the film. In the aforementioned opening story, the Jabari are described as a secret fifth tribe that "isolated themselves in the mountain" and refused to follow the original king's rule. Although this mention occurs early in the film, audiences do not see any indication of the group until the ritual combat that will determine which warrior will be crowned the next king and Black Panther. While none of the four monarchical tribes put forth a challenger, the Jabari emerge from the rocks with a

tribal chant and put forth their leader, M'Baku.

In the comic source material, this character is named Man-Ape and serves as a villain to T'Challa. This portrayal of Africans as apes, even if the connection is in the fantastical world of Marvel, makes them seem less than human, which has been a historical comparison to justify the enslavement of Black people for hundreds of years. Over time, these overtly racist representations have been toned down, but many individuals in recent times still give social meaning to the notion of these racial groups as apes (Ratten & Eberhardt, 2010). Instead of shying away from this character or acknowledging the colonial undertones of this portrayal, the film attributes the gorilla image to the only Wakandan tribe that is "othered" and does not follow the implied acceptance of T'Challa as rightful ruler. However, when M'Baku attempts to take the throne and gain sovereignty over Wakanda, he is defeated despite being much larger and stronger than the incumbent king. While this outcome may be chalked up to a plot point that helps set up the rest of the film, the fact that a stereotyped "ape-man" cannot even defeat his own black kin implies that he is not worthy of success and status.

Agent Ross serves as a neocolonial whitewashing of CIA operations in African countries. In the film, he first appears as the anonymous American buyer for a shady Vibranium deal with Klaue in South Korea. After he meets T'Challa and has a terse interaction with the Wakandan ruler, he radios his backups and informs them that they cannot let the Black Panther take the criminal hostage. Although the plot never reveals what Ross planned to do with the Vibranium "on behalf of the United States government," his decision to prevent Klaue from being taken into custody is curious. After the deal blows up, figuratively and literally, Ross saves Nakia from dying when Killmonger rescues his fellow antagonist from interrogation. After this heroic act, he becomes a permanent member of the team and is a rare outsider that the Wakandans bring into their home turf. Despite the cagey introduction, Ross reveals himself as an innocuous and caring individual that is subject to taunts such as "colonizer" by Shuri, T'Challa's younger sister. M'Baku jokingly threatens to "feed [Ross] to [his] children" (*Black Panther*, 2018). In the climactic battle, the CIA agent uses his aerial expertise to virtually pilot a fighter plane to wipe out opposing forces while risking his life yet again in the process.

While Ross may serve a key role in helping the Wakandans restore peace to their kingdom, the historical connections between the CIA and Africa are far more pernicious. While the secretive nature of the organization and its declassified documentation makes evidence of direct meddling almost impossible to find, evidence suggests that the CIA had vested interests in East Africa during the War on Terror and in political instability in the Congo during the 1960s, among other issues (Hajdarmataj, 2020; Robarge, 2014). With this suspicious history and the ethical and moral gray area that comes from international surveillance, caution should be employed when taking the portrayal of Ross at face value.

Another complicating factor is the noticeable softening of the CIA's image in recent films such as *Argo* and *Zero Dark Thirty*. The agency's image has improved from one deserving mockery for its incompetence to an entirely benevolent force that spreads neocolonial values by "saving" foreign cultures. This shift has a direct correlation with the organization having more creative control over projects that depict them, and therefore the agency can control its image in the public eye (Schou, 2016). With this obvious conflict of interest, Ross becomes less of a benevolent (White) savior just performing his duty, and more of a neocolonial whitewashing of the negative effects that the United States has had on surveillance in foreign countries.

I Just Can't be King: The Killmonger Colonial Complex

Perhaps the most compelling colonialist storyline in the film comes through the main antagonist, Erik Killmonger. Instead of shying away from the colonial narratives that the film contains or using them as a cheap punchline, Killmonger has a radical ideology that will enforce an uprising that will help "around two billion" historically oppressed Black people across the world come into power and erase hundreds of years of unfair treatment based solely on the color of their skin (*Black Panther*, 2018). However, instead of rewarding a man who survived the harsh conditions of urban life as a Black American, the plot instead refuses to allow this aspiring colonialist to "beat [white colonialists] at their own game" in his bid to rule Wakanda (*Black Panther*, 2018).

While a reading of this refusal to allow the antagonist to "fight fire with fire" through colonial rule may seem logical, the company payrolling the film has a checkered history with portraying colonialism. Disney has historically struggled with telling the stories of minorities and historically oppressed people fairly in classic films such as *Pocahantas* and *Mulan*, as well as more contemporary works such as *Moana* (Anjirbag, 2018; Buescher & Ono, 1996). The themes in these films mainly portray colonialism as positive and necessary to help indigenous "others" become more "sophisticated" through (white) colonial interference, as well as coloniality, which upholds the structures of privilege that have survived traditional colonial practices and continue in a neocolonial age. While *Black Panther* received deserved praise for its sensitivity in portraying traditional African customs and mannerisms in a mostly positive light, the film nonetheless displaces white colonialist desires onto Killmonger, a Black American character who is then vilified for these aspirations.

Audiences first get a taste of Killmonger's fiery rhetoric and no-holds-barred approach to gaining power from an early scene set in a quasi-British Museum in London, United Kingdom. While he enters an African exhibit, a white female museum curator instantly approaches him and asks if he needs help. Killmonger obliges, asking the whereabouts of a number of artifacts. When he reaches the one containing Vibranium, he disagrees with her account of where the axe comes from, saying, "it was taken by British soldiers in Benin, but it's from Wakanda" (*Black Panther*, 2018). He then goes on to say that he will "take it off [her] hands," which she responds by saying the artifact, "is not for sale" (*Black Panther*, 2018). Killmonger is incensed by this reply, moving towards her and sneering while saying, "How do you think your ancestors got these? You think they paid a fair price? Or did they take it, like they took everything else?" This powerful exchange shows the deep rooted hatred the villain has pent up over the years at those with colonialist backgrounds who fail to acknowledge the ill-gotten gains of colonialist rule in countries like England, who take important artifacts and resources and peddle them like they are their own. Immediately after the curator asks him to leave, Killmonger makes a point about racial profiling before revealing that he poisoned her, setting up his path to steal the axe and escape with Klaue.

Killmonger also employs colonialist rhetoric when he unceremoniously enters Wakanda after ruthlessly killing his significant other and Klaue, presenting the body of the wanted criminal as a path to entry. After explaining that he did something that T'Challa could not deliver on, one of the elders asks what he desires, to which he retorts, "I want the throne" (*Black Panther*, 2018). Killmonger points out that while the Wakandans live a fairly sheltered and privileged life, the aforementioned two billion Black people are suffering. However, he believes that, "Wakanda has

the tools to liberate 'em all," through the use of Vibranium and advanced weaponry. After T'Challa explains that, "It is not [the Wakandans'] way to be judge, jury, and executioner," for outsiders, Killmonger rhetorically asks, "Didn't life start right here on this continent? So ain't all people your people?" (*Black Panther*, 2018). By bringing up the fact that Africa is the first known site of human existence, the revolutionary flips the argument on its head, showing that he believes Wakanda is responsible for every Black person around the globe. Killmonger ends this terse encounter by shouting out his royal lineage and setting up the first duel with T'Challa for the role of king and Black Panther.

This revolutionary dialogue continues after Killmonger defeats T'Challa and takes the throne. He begins his upheaval of Wakandan tradition, culminating in the burning of the sacred Garden of the Heart Shaped Herb. In a meeting with top ranking officials, he laments the fact that previous uprisings in America did not have the firepower that could have been provided by Wakanda. This reference alludes to failed revolutions from historical leaders like Nat Turner, an enslaved man who organized an armed assault on slave owners in 1831, and John Brown, a white abolitionist who undertook a similar conflict a few decades later. Killmonger then notes the distinct strategic advantages that Wakanda has to incite a widespread uprising. He says that "[he] know[s] how colonizers think" and that Wakanda is "gonna use their own strategy against 'em." He explains more semantics of the plan, which will help "oppressed people . . . finally rise up and kill those in power. And their children. And anyone else who takes their side" (*Black Panther*, 2018).

This extreme approach harkens back to traditional colonialist methods of taking over nations, as toppling leaders and murdering family members and sympathizers makes establishing a new order much easier for the conquering country. Killmonger seethes that "the world's gonna start over, and this time, we're [Wakandans and Black people] on top. The sun will never set on the Wakandan empire" (*Black Panther*, 2018). These lines clearly outline the colonialist nature of his plan, since he aims to assume power and keep a tight command on those who have systematically done the same to Black people all over the world for centuries. The last line also brings up the famous phrase "the empire on which the sun never sets," which refers to one country having outsized colonial control. Most commonly used to refer to the historical British Empire, the sentiment behind the phrase is that the country it describes has gained so much land that their influence can be felt on all corners of the earth, even when the sun moves away from the main country. By incorporating overtly colonialist rhetoric and connecting it to Killmonger, Disney makes sure that audiences are fearful of a Black colonialist who poses a threat to both a utopian African society and to the white hegemonic systems that have ruled countries for centuries.

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Although Killmonger may be written off as a deranged Nat Turner wannabe, his psyche has been formed through the harsh conditions of Oakland, California and the rigors of military training. In the very first live action scene, audiences witness his father being murdered by T'Challa's father, T'Chaka, when he was a young boy. As if losing a paternal figure was not enough misery to endure, Killmonger is abandoned by the Wakandans because he "was the truth [T'Chaka] chose to omit," a fact only posthumously revealed by the late king to his son in a spirit world visit (*Black Panther*, 2018).. When the skilled assassin shows up in Wakanda after killing Klaue, Ross reveals that his birth name is Erik Stevens, and he "joined the [Navy] SEALs" after quickly graduating undergraduate school from Navy college and graduate school at MIT. After he joined the elite secret force, he shipped out to Afghanistan and "wrapped up confirmed kills, like it was a video game" (*Black Panther*, 2018). Thus, he earned the nickname "Killmonger" and continued on to an even more elite JSOC ghost unit, who "will drop off the grid, so they can commit assassinations and take down governments" (*Black Panther*, 2018). In this rapid debriefing, audiences gather that he has received elite training from the best the United States has to offer, all while dealing with unresolved trauma from his father's assassination at the hands of his uncle.

On top of a laundry list of trauma for Killmonger, his failure to acknowledge his own mental problems is systematic of his upbringing. Adewale et al. (2016) found that Black Americans tended to be more cognizant of injustices stemming from issues such as colonialism and imperialism than their Nigerian-American counterparts. Additionally, Black Americans were less likely to seek mental health treatment and held more stigmatized views on mental illness in the same study. These findings demonstrate how a combination of viewing social injustice issues and a refusal to acknowledge mental health issues can create a devastating cocktail of problems that are almost impossible to overcome. For Killmonger, his inability to recognize issues stemming from a troubled childhood in Oakland compounded with his affiliation with the United States military. Together, these forces turned him from a sympathetic child into a killing machine with no compassion and a single-minded approach to gaining and maintaining power. The end result is a powerful Black colonialist who challenges the norms of Wakanda while also providing a threat to dominant (white) societies around the world that still give its citizens advantages from the ill gotten gains of their own imperialist actions over the years.

Conclusion

Black Panther has proven to be one of the most successful commercial and critical superhero movies of all time. This widespread popularity and acclaim are a testament to its dedication to portraying historically oppressed populations and cultures fairly, which has helped create positive role models and images for Black Americans and Africans. However, the film does not do enough to dispel colonialist ideals, which are often referred to but often not overtly refuted. However, they are challenged by Killmonger, who correctly identifies the problematic elements of colonialist ideals and attempts to reverse-colonize the world through Wakanda with Black people in power this time. However, Disney refuses to allow a minority be the "good" colonizer--a la John Smith in *Pocahontas*--and instead vilifies Killmonger as a Ratcliffe figure since his ideas are too radical for a white audience. Neocolonialism also presents itself in some truly problematic ways throughout the film. M'Baku may be a traditional comic book character, but his connection to apes and his tribe's outsider status engender and fail to rebuke ugly stereotypes that have made Black people, especially men, seem less than human in the public eye and also show them as an Others who must be controlled and eliminated for the safety of whites. Additionally, the promotion of Agent Ross from a bumbling sidekick in the comics to a trustworthy helper for the Wakandans ignores a checkered history of CIA interference in Africa, while also creating a sympathetic alternative to the seemingly dangerous Killmonger. Additionally, this movie serves as a major "seeing," or representative, moment in comic book cinema for minority audiences, particularly young Black Americans. If some of the problematic elements of the film translate to how these groups

see the world, they may believe they are inferior or should believe in the whitewashing of the colonial legacy. While *Black Panther* has made great strides in promoting diversity and inclusion in superhero movies, the insidious colonialist and neocolonialist values that Disney has made mainstream over the years and propagated in the film must be accounted for.

Limitations

While this study covers colonial and neocolonial themes in *Black Panther* well, there are some limitations to the analysis. Although Marvel produced the film as a subsidiary to Disney, research could not find a link that determined how much creative or productive influence the parent company had while it was being made. As a result, this lack of scholarship lessens the impact of discussing colonial and neocolonial themes that can be more viscerally found in Disney-produced films such as *Pocahantas* and *Moana* (Anjirbag, 2018; Buescher & Ono, 1996). The possible influence (or lack thereof) of the Disney Company on *Black Panther* and other Marvel movies that may potentially have these themes could be examined more thoroughly using a production analysis that examines how media texts are constructed and for what purpose. Another limitation with the study has to do with the lack of information on the extent that these narratives have on audiences, especially for children. Since many impressions on the world are formed from an early age, this population is especially important to look at when determining the long-term impact of a media text. As a result, an audience analysis would be useful to see if *Black Panther* causes viewers to take in colonial or neocolonial ideals, and how these ideals may have negative effects if they are assumed. Overall, a colonial lens brings into focus vague allusions to a sordid African colonial history and neocolonial themes in some important characters, as well as raises important questions about how Disney portrays minority colonialists in the film. These concepts should be taken into consideration as the company looks to expand its representation of different cultures into media subsidiaries such as Marvel.

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College Girl Commentary: Teaching African American Literature and History

Rachel Daniels ***ENGL 215: African American Literature***

The final project in ENGL 215: African American Literature was to choose a public audience --meaning an audience beyond our class and the professor-- and use course content to pose an argument to that audience. Rachel took on this project by writing a series of blog posts aimed at convincing her school district back home to integrate more African American literature and history in their curriculum. Rachel integrates her sources seamlessly, always using them to illustrate and enhance her strong, original arguments. These posts are a strong example of much-needed public humanities writing.

-Valerie Billing

Why am I just now joining this conversation?

Attending high school in my small town was a privilege. Our teachers challenged us and repeatedly told us they were "preparing us for college." At the time, the late nights and piles of homework were not something I appreciated—at all. However, after attending two different universities in my first year of college, I realized how blessed I was to grow up in a school district where students are cared for, challenged, and prepared for the academic journey that lies ahead, should they choose to pursue a degree beyond a high school diploma. However, soon after the start of my second year of college at Central College, I took a class that suddenly made me question the K-12 education that I took so much pride in.

English 215 was not only a general elective that fulfilled my literature credit, but also the only class that fit in my schedule, so I enrolled without giving it much thought. However, I soon realized it offered content that was not to be taken lightly. The first day of class, my professor asked, "How many of you have ever had an African American teacher?" I thought long and hard, picturing every teacher or instructor I'd had. *Surely I've had an African American teacher at some point.* Given that I live in a very White community, it's no surprise that I haven't had an African American teacher. *But why had it never even crossed my mind?* I began the class, African American Literature, 3 months ago and the perspective I've gained has been eye-opening.

There is a lot of tension and polarization regarding the issue of racial inequality, White privilege, and the Black Lives Matter movement in America today. Spurred by the death of George Floyd, people have been talking about race relations and what needs to be done. I had personally never joined this conversation or felt the need to form an opinion. *As long as I'm not racist, I'm doing my part. Can't we all just get along and love each other?* However, after taking this course, I've learned that the issue is so complex that it can't be fixed by a shift in our attitudes. The history of African Americans is the most painful part of America's story to hear, and as I continued to read and learn more, I started to question why I'd never been offered this information before. My history classes didn't cover it, nor did my English classes ever have any conversations regarding race relations, systemic racism, or racial stereotypes.

In these upcoming blog posts, I plan to share what I've learned about African American literature and how this course has opened my eyes. I believe District 228 is doing a great job of educating students. However, I firmly believe there should be elements added that will prepare students not only for the academic setting of college, but also for the social setting more diverse than our community. Education should be offered on race relations in the past, as well as the present. It's

inevitable that our students will find themselves in conversations or situations regarding racism and social injustice; therefore, it's absolutely necessary that they are given the information and education they need to join in this conversation with confidence.

Trust issues

Growing up, we were taught about the "founding fathers" of America. George Washington, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, James Madison, and more White-wigged men's legacies are engraved in our minds as the wise and heroic figures that crafted the foundation of our great nation. However, an essay we read from *The New York Times*, titled, "Our Democracy's Founding Ideals Were False When They Were Written. Black Americans Have Fought to Make Them True," made me question the integrity of the men I believed were historical heroes.
In this essay, Hannah-Jones, a Black woman author, discusses the hypocrisies of our nation's founding. When discussing the Declaration of Independence, she writes,

> [I]n making the argument against Britain's tyranny, one of the colonists' favorite rhetorical devices was to claim that they were the slaves—to Britain. For this duplicity, they faced burning criticism both at home and abroad. As Samuel Johnson, an English writer and Tory opposed to American independence, quipped, "How is it we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of Negroes?"

The founders' hypocrisy was something that had never crossed my mind; I wave the American flag around on the 4th of July each year feeling warm and fuzzy about this nation we live in. However, it never occurred to me that we hoot and holler for the freedom we gained in 1776, even though we were simultaneously enslaving African Americans on plantations. Since this is something that is part of our history whether we like it or not, it should be better addressed in our education. Rather than sugar coating it, we should tell students honestly what happened. We should be purchasing texts written about the United States from an outsider's perspective to compare the narratives that are shared.

Furthermore, something that crushed my prior beliefs was a section of Hannah-Jones's text about Honest Abe, the man who ended slavery, fought for African Americans, and encouraged everyone to get along—so I thought. However, Hannah-Jones narrates,

> He had gotten Congress to appropriate funds to ship Black people, once freed, to another country. "Why should they leave this country? This is, perhaps, the first question for proper consideration," Lincoln told them. "You and we are different races. … Your race suffer very greatly, many of them, by living among us, and while ours suffer from your presence. In a word, we suffer on each side."

I had to take a second to process what I read here. I have always had an image of Abraham Lincoln being one of the greatest and most honorable presidents; however, he clearly didn't feel that integration and equality was the solution. Again, what was most alarming was that I had never learned this. Why do we idealize the founders of our nation rather than taking responsibility for what they created? I'm not trying to discredit the work our founding fathers did. Clearly, they built a strong foundation for our country, but this foundation was also extremely racist and exclusive of both Black people and women—something that *must* be acknowledged. After reading this text, I had a great loss of trust in my past educators. What else was I not being taught the truth about? It seems as though we are taught

American history from a White perspective, while the roots of African American history are taught in a way that's separate from the rest of American history.

To combat this, I believe District 228 should adopt a curriculum similar to that of *The 1619 Project,* which promotes a shift in the viewing of American history. On the Pulitzer Center Lesson Builder Resources website, it states that their goal is to "challenge readers to reframe their understanding of U.S. history by considering 1619 as the start of this nation's story" (1619 was when the first Africans arrived on U.S. soil on slave ships in Jamestown, Virginia). This would not only be more effective in teaching an accurate representation of American history, but it would also be effective in showing *all* students that African American history *is* American history, and that their contributions were just as significant as those White-wigged men drafting the Constitution.

I've learned that African Americans are responsible for the incredible growth and prosperity of our nation. They worked long hours in grueling conditions, tending to the crops and other industries that allowed America to succeed without being paid a dime for labor. I believe District 228 is doing our students a disservice by not sharing the perspective of our history from an African American standpoint; we don't provide the whole story, nor do our classes represent the full truth.

Hallie Taets, 4' x 4" mixed media

A New Perspective

Another thing that caused a major shift in my perspective during my African American Literature class was hearing the voices and perspectives of African Americans. Yes, history is important, and we must study it in order to understand the context and motivation of African American authors, but it's equally important to read modern texts reflecting on the past. This allows us to understand how Black people today are still hindered by the lingering effects of slavery. Yet again I questioned why I had never been exposed to these perspectives before, or considered the lack of diversity in the literature I was reading. Yes, I read argumentative texts in high school, but few of them were by African American authors, and none of them were conversations specifically about race. My favorite course text of this semester was titled, *So You Want to Talk About Race?* by Ijeoma Oluo. The

purpose of her book is to fearlessly address complicated conversations and racial issues, such as White privilege, police brutality, microaggressions, intersectionality, and the use of the n-word. (Sounds like a lot to take on, right?) She opened my eyes to Black Americans' feelings regarding race in America, as well as White Americans' contributions to those feelings.

After reading a chapter of Oluo's book and other similar pieces, I was able to understand how racism, stereotypes, and microaggressions impact African Americans on a regular basis. In the introduction to her book, she shares:

> Race, my race, has been one of the most defining forces in my life. But it is not something I always talked about, certainly not the way I do now. Like most people, most of my days were spent just trying to get by. Life is busy and hard. There are work and kids and chores and friends. We spend a lot of time bouncing from one mini-crisis to the next. Yes, my days were just as full of microaggressions, of the pain and oppression of racism, as they are now—but I just had to keep going on as normal. It is very hard to survive as a woman of color in this world, and I remember saying once that if I stopped to feel, really feel, the pain of racism I encountered, I would start screaming and I would never ever stop (2-3).

People can attempt to make the argument that racism isn't a problem in America, or that systemic racism and White privilege aren't serious issues; however, they can not argue with peoples' feelings. Every human being is entitled to their emotions and we can't deny that Black people in America are hurting. This quote illustrates that Oluo is a mom, wife, and worker, but she also is a Black woman, which adds another aspect of stress--simply because of the color of her skin. This was alarming because I had never considered how infrequently race crosses my mind or affects my life as a White American, compared to an African American. It had never crossed my mind because I'd never been exposed to a text like Oluo's.

I believe we need to expose students to texts like this in high school, if not earlier. Although this may be an awkward and touchy subject, that is why it is so urgent to discuss. Students should be having conversations and writing papers about the perspectives of Black Americans. It seems ridiculous to hope that a society would function cohesively without understanding and respecting each other. It's extremely important that as a White community, we are educating students on the facts, as well as the feelings, involved in the past and present situation of African Americans. Once we understand the history and the effects of that history, we will be able to move forward and make change.

Show me the literature

Given that my African American Literature class is what caused the major shift in my perspective, I believe our English department at GHS needs to step up its game when it comes to incorporating African American literature into the curriculum. A novel we read and discussed in English 215 was *Beloved*, by Toni Morrison. The book is about an African American woman who escaped slavery; however, she was unable to escape the memories and trauma that she acquired during her time at "Sweet Home," the plantation she was on. *Beloved* is an especially interesting story because the memories of slavery come back to haunt her—literally—when her deceased infant enters the story as a ghost.

The book is especially useful for an English class because it is not only a beautifully crafted piece of literature, but it also covers the history of slavery and the gripping trauma that accompanies it. Students already learn to analyze novels, so it only makes sense to add the dimension of race into the conversation as well. In the story, Morrison writes:

> There is a loneliness that can be rocked. Arms crossed, Anybody white could take your whole self for anything that came to mind. Not just work, kill, or maim you, but dirty you. Dirty you so bad you couldn't like yourself anymore. Dirty you so bad you forgot who you were and couldn't think it up. And though she lived through and got over it, she could never let it happen to her own. The best thing she was, was her children (295-96).

This passage exemplifies how complex *Beloved* is. Not only is there a complex relationship between the characters and their relationship with their memories, there is also a complicated situation regarding the characters' views of themselves. Throughout the whole book they deal with internal conflict and struggle to fight off the memories of slavery from their past. However, another interesting concept alluded to in this quote is the passing on of the main character's trauma to her children, which brings up an interesting conversation. In other words, the brutality of slavery ends up influencing the younger generations through their parents. These are just a few discussion topics that could be drawn from this quote, and this is only one tiny section of the book.

I'm not naïve enough to think that high school students are suddenly going to be thrilled about reading a novel about the effects of slavery; however, the book is only a little over 300 pages and it has a good mix of action, romance, narrative, and drama. Although students may not be ecstatic about being forced to read this book (or any book), it is a very manageable read that will engage students while exposing them to important content about slavery and African American experiences.

Furthermore, I believe our English classes could benefit from reading poetry written by African American authors regarding social injustice. For example, we read *Testify* by Simone John, and I found the collection extremely compelling. I've never read any poetry like this—contemporary, easily understood, and related to current events in America. Plus, it didn't leave me completely clueless as to what the author meant! In the poem, "Morning Rites (Or: How We Bury Your Son)," John writes:

> Gather his sneakers from each corner of the house. / Bury them at the basketball court. Cut the net / from the rim and place it in your purse. / When the sound of Jays on concrete / makes a sob crawl up your throat / finger the nylon like prayer beads (24).

I know I've never read a poem that talks about Jays or a basketball rim in my previous English classes, but it makes it much more relatable—not to mention more interesting. It allows a young reader to picture a sweet pair of sneakers on their favorite basketball court in town. We can visualize a mother then burying those shoes and cutting down the net. It does a great job of simulating the feelings of African Americans regarding police brutality because the reader is encouraged to feel the pain of premature loss of life, something no one wants to feel. The love of a mother is universal, and to know that pain was caused by police brutality causes anger and sadness in the reader. The collection repeatedly references well-known names of people that were victims of police brutality, such as Trayvon Martin. The author later lists 21 more names in one single poem, and the stark reality of those names make the argument of the poetry even more powerful. Mothers everywhere are having to bury their children as a result of racial stereotypes and an ugly history.

John's description of racial inequality and police brutality was another rude awakening. I had a sinking feeling in my stomach and wondered why I'd *never* been exposed to this type of literature before. I believe that incorporating African American literature into the District 228 curriculum, not necessarily as a specific unit, but as regular course texts, will open students' minds to the perspective of Black mothers, fathers, and children all over America. Both *Beloved* and *Testify* are great options to

utilize in the classroom for this purpose.

Hopefully, this exposure and the discussion that accompanies it will spur a desire within students to continue learning more about race outside of the classroom. (Spoiler: Stay tuned for next post).

What are YOU gonna do about it?

I've spent a lot of time discussing measures that the school district urgently needs to take in order to better educate its students. While this is an important step in getting students exposed to the topics and conversations regarding race, I also believe there is an individual responsibility that accompanies this exposure. Do I think every student needs to wear BLM shirts and start protesting? No, not exactly. Although both of those things are fine, I simply believe the first step is to take the initiative to invest time in learning about the feelings of our fellow citizens.

The final text my class was assigned was *Americanah*, a novel by Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. When I began the book, I was simply expecting to analyze the text as I went and gather points to discuss in class; however, I was sucked into the book and I couldn't put it down. The time I spent reading felt more like a break than it did like homework. There's a quote on the front of the book from the *San Francisco Chronicle* that remarks, "Dazzling. . . . Funny and defiant, and simultaneously so wise. . . . Brilliant." I couldn't agree more with this statement. Adichie ties together cultural diversity, race relations, American politics, romance, and social activism seamlessly. Although there are many complex arguments being made in the novel, both obvious and hidden, I was never overwhelmed or bored. It was extremely educational without coming across as an academic text.

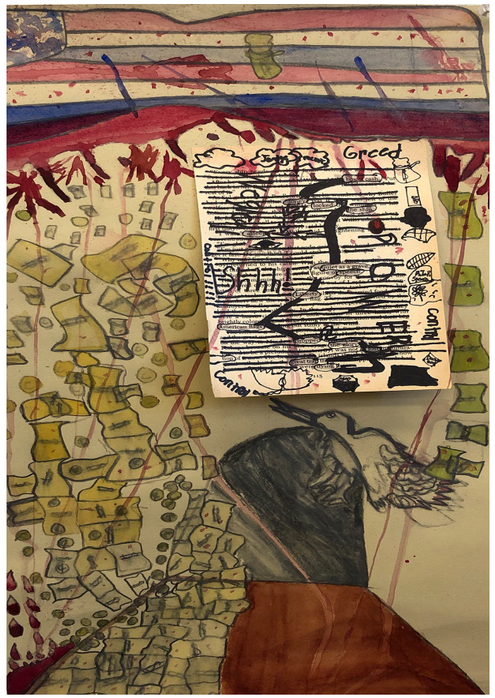
The main character, Ifemelu, is a Nigerian woman who attends college in America. She offers an incredibly honest and objective point of view of race in America. She has a blog, which serves as a way for the author to speak directly to the reader about the race problems happening within the context of the story. I was personally drawn to the book because it was set in 2008, during Obama's election, a time I lived through. Not to mention, there was also a riveting love story that kept my attention as well. The perspective offered by Ifemelu was extremely interesting because she provided an interpretation of America with fresh eyes and blatant honesty. At one point she remarks,

> The only reason you say that race was not an issue is because you wish it was not. We all wish it was not. But it's a lie. I came from a country where race was not an issue; I did not think of myself as black and I only became black when I came to America. When you are black in America and you fall in love with a white person, race doesn't matter when you're alone together because it's just you and your love. But the minute you step outside, race matters. But we don't talk about it. We don't even tell our white partners the small things that piss us off and the things we wish they understood better, because we're worried they will way we're overreacting or we're being too sensitive (359).

I believe this is exactly what we need to hear, especially as White Americans. The novel shows that even though we don't want racism to exist, pretending it doesn't only fuels the frustration of those it affects. She addresses that in close relationships, race fades away; however, in the "real world," it's clear as day. Because we can't stay hidden in the safety of close relationships, we must bring racism and racial inequality to light and start working on solutions. This unfiltered description of American race relations from an unbiased perspective offers an honest interpretation of the ways in which we function in our society. The good, the bad, and the ugly—Ifemelu covers it all.

Personally, I enjoy reading novels and non-fiction texts to learn about race; however, I know this isn't for everyone. Luckily, there are many other ways to access this type of media if you aren't a book-lover. Listen to a Podcast (*Codeswitch, Still Processing, The Daily, 1619, Pod Save the People*). Watch a movie (*13th*). Find a TED Talk (The Danger Of A Single Story: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie). Search for blogs, or travel to a live speaker. There is no good excuse for not educating yourself outside of the classroom. Even one educational source per month is better than nothing. If we expect change to happen, we each need to do our part. By starting small, we can eventually see big changes in our knowledge, our perspective, and our actions.

In conclusion, the only way to gain insight into the problem of racism is to seek that perspective out, but it's not going to simply fall into our laps—especially not in our small town. In the book *So You Want to Talk About Race?* Oluo says it best. She states, "We have to commit to the process if we want to address race, racism, and social oppression in our society" (6). Oluo doesn't say it's going to be easy or that once you start investing in the fight against injustice you will immediately understand all things about race. She says it takes commitment. If each student and each member of our community makes that commitment and sacrifices just a few hours each month to educate themselves on race in America, our small steps toward improvement will begin to compound.



Rodney Williams, 10" x 18" mixed media

That's a wrap

To wrap these posts up, I'd like to do a short recap:

Overall, I believe District 228 does an excellent job educating its students. However, it seems that the issue of race has been tip-toed around because of its controversial nature. While I understand this, I also believe it's a dangerous way to live. Simply avoiding these topics causes students to be blindsided when they're faced with them after high school. Whether inside or outside of the classroom, it will come up.

Some may respond to these posts by claiming that we don't have an equality problem and that discussing racial inequality in schools will only cause unnecessary debate. These same people often make it clear that they are not racist, and add that they actually have Black friends. However, if this is true, it does not change the fact that we tell the story of American history from a predominantly White perspective. If someone truly believes we have equality in this nation and claims not to be racist, it only makes sense that they would also be in support of learning about their fellow citizens' histories and honoring the feelings that history has caused generation after generation.

I understand this still may be seen as an extreme claim. Some would consider it overcompensation, or something like "reverse-racism," because African American history would be getting *more* attention than that of White Americans. However, isn't that exactly how African Americans have felt their entire lives? If this "reverse-racism" is such an injustice, then why are we currently tolerating the racism that exists now? African Americans learn the story of their nation's history from a viewpoint that is not their own, year after year. Isn't it time we honor theirs? If we truly don't have an equality problem, then we should have no hesitation taking time to invest in the people in our nation who look a little different than us.

Although incorporating curriculum on racism and social injustice in America into District 228 is a daunting task, I believe we can take small and relatively simple steps to give students the basic education and awareness they need. First, I believe we need to tell an unbiased story of America's founding and emphasize the contributions of Black people to our nation's growth and development. This can be done using *The 1619 Project* curriculum, or something similar to it. Secondly, our students need to hear the voices of African Americans to learn the difference in their perspectives regarding race. There are many ways to find these opinions, and students should be encouraged to spend time with sources like these outside the classroom as well. Lastly, African American literature should be incorporated into our English departments. In case you haven't yet noticed, even one class and a few thought-provoking questions can change the way a student thinks (and maybe even cause them to write a series of blog posts in response to that change). Something Oluo says in the introduction of *So You Want To Talk About Race?* offers support for an urgent response from the school district regarding my proposal. She explains:

> Yes, racism and racial oppression in America is horrible and terrifying. The feelings it brings up in us are justified. But it is also everywhere, in every corner of our lives. We have to let go of some of that fear. We have to be able to look racism in the eye wherever we encounter it. If we continue to treat racism like it is a giant monster that is chasing us, we will be forever running (5).

African Americans need more than friends—they need allies. Our students can't become those allies unless they're adequately equipped to do so. Will District 228 step up to the plate?

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A Family Experience?: Familial Roles and Their Impact on Illness Experiences in *The Farewell*

Marin Harrington ***COMM 276: Communicating Health & Illness***

This piece was written in Fall 2020 for COMM 276: Communicating Health & Illness. The assignment was to select a narrative that focuses on the personal or family experience of an illness and analyze that narrative from a health communication perspective, bringing the narrative into dialogue with health communication theory and research. I nominate this piece for the sophisticated analysis it offers as it expertly brings together health communication theory and this portrayal of lived experience. In addition, the author does an excellent job of providing informed insight into the complex cultural perspectives enacted in the narrative. I think we often view practices of people from other cultural traditions -- such as those portrayed in the film under analysis -- with perplexity, or even judgment. In this analysis, Harrington artfully uses theory to enlighten perspectives and cultivate (inter) cultural understanding.

- Dr. Linda Laine

In the opening credits of writer-director Lulu Wang's 2019 film *The Farewell*, a single phrase appears on the screen: "Based on a true lie." In one of the film's first scenes, 30-year-old Billi Wang, the first-generation American daughter of Chinese immigrants, learns that her grandmother, Nai Nai, is dying of Stage IV lung cancer. Nai Nai, along with most of Billi's other relatives, still live in China. Billi's parents inform her that they are planning a trip to China to see Nai Nai, but the family has decided not to tell Nai Nai about her own cancer diagnosis due to cultural and personal reasons. Billi disagrees with her family's decision and struggles to cope with Nai Nai's illness (especially while in Nai Nai's presence). Through these external and internal conflicts, the film examines the unique challenges illness poses to an entire family within a specific cultural context, focusing on the various roles family members can perform during illness through the concepts of social support and the Voice of Lifeworld. The film also showcases the social construction of illness through narration, particularly through the narrative functions of asserting control and transforming identities.

Perhaps most central to *The Farewell* is the questions it raises about the appropriate role family plays in supporting a loved one who is terminally ill. To what extent family should be involved in another's health care decisions is unclear and often culturally relative, as is which people are considered "family" (du Pré, 2017). In the case of the Wang family, many people are involved in the decisions about Nai Nai's health—including her siblings, children, and grandchildren. Billi's uncle (Nai Nai's son) explains to her the reason for such widespread involvement in keeping Nai Nai's cancer a secret from her by saying, "You want to tell Nai Nai the truth because you don't want to take responsibility for her, because it's too big of a burden. It's our duty to carry this emotional burden for her." Their perceived role is to experience the emotional toll of Nai Nai's cancer themselves so that Nai Nai does not experience that toll at all. This rationale reflects a culture-centered approach to health that emphasizes the "intersection of culture, structure, and agency" where "purifying the mind is intertwined with taking care of the body" and "maintaining the harmony of the mind and the body is central to the delivery of health" (Dillard et al., 2014, to treatment, so the family believes they must safeguard her mental harmony by keeping her cancer a secret from her.

The family's choice to take on the role that they do reflects the concept of social support. Barnes and Duck (1994) define social support as, "behaviors that, whether directly or indirectly, communicate to an individual that she or he is valued and cared for by others" (p. 176). The family indirectly shows Nai Nai social support by keeping her cancer from her. Doing so is meant to erase Nai Nai's fear about her eventual death. The lie itself stems from their deep care for Nai Nai's emotional state, even though Nai Nai does not realize she is being supported in this way. The family's means of social support is later affirmed by Nai Nai's doctor. He explains to a concerned Billi that most people in China choose not to tell family members with terminal cancer about their diagnoses and that his family did the same thing when his grandfather was dying of cancer. As a result, Billi attempts to adjust her perception to match Chinese culture's view of how to best socially support Nai Nai.

Keeping Nai Nai's cancer a secret from her as a form of social support also relates to the Voice of Lifeworld. This concept is typically associated with how patients speak, emphasizing how patients are "primarily concerned with health and illness as they relate to everyday life" (du Pré, 2017, pg. 73). Since Nai Nai does not know about her illness, however, she cannot speak about its effects on her daily life, though her family can. Their main motivation for not telling Nai Nai about her cancer is because they think that knowing about her cancer will negatively impact her everyday emotional state to a severe degree. They do not want Nai Nai's final months filled with fear that stops her from doing things she loves.

The lie itself stems from their deep care for Nai Nai's emotional state, even though Nai Nai does not realize she is being supported in this way.

As Billi's mother humorously puts it, "If you tell her [about the cancer], you'll ruin her good mood." The family is much more concerned with Nai Nai's potential feelings about the illness in her day-to-day life than they are with transmitting scientific knowledge about the illness to her. As mentioned earlier, Nai Nai's doctor supports the family's use of the Voice of Lifeworld, reducing the possibility of tension between the family and Nai Nai's caregiver, which relates to Barry et al.'s (2001) findings that the most productive medical relationships are those where "both doctor and patient both stuck to the voice of medicine (Strictly Medicine) or where both used the voice of lifeworld (Mutual Lifeworld)" (p. 503). The only difference is that in this instance, the patient is replaced with the family unit. Such cohesion also positively affects Nai Nai, even if she does not realize it.

The role the Wang family takes on while navigating Nai Nai's cancer very much shapes the overarching narrative, or story, they construct about her illness. A major component of crafting illness narratives is language use (Sharf & Vanderford, 2003). The language of the broader narrative might seem simple at first: the family does not want Nai Nai to know about her cancer, so they lie about it and say she has a respiratory infection. The reason they construct such a narrative, however, is because of the meaning they want to ascribe to Nai Nai's illness and eventual death (Sharf & Vanderford, 2003). They assume that if Nai Nai knows she is dying, her illness will subsume her entire identity, making her death one of agitation as opposed to peace. In addition, they do not want her to focus on her death so much that she treats her life as though it no longer has any meaning. Hence this comment from one of Billi's relatives: "It's a good lie."

In order to construct the meaning surrounding Nai Nai's cancer that they want, the Wang family relies on various narrative functions to accomplish this goal. This first function is, perhaps a little too obviously asserting control (Sharf & Vanderford, 2003). Interestingly, the function has a dual effect in the film. The family constructs the narrative that Nai Nai is not actually sick in order to maintain control over what Nai Nai does and does not know about her health. In this regard, they hold enormous control over her. The reason they exercise such power, however, is because they do not want Nai Nai's emotions to spiral out of control due to fear. Early into the film, Billi's mom tells her, "Chinese people have a saying: 'When people get cancer, they die. It's not the cancer that kills them, but the fear.' " By controlling that Nai Nai does not know about her own cancer, the family believes that they are allowing her to retain her fullest sense of self, and thereby empowering her amidst her illness.

The second function of illness narratives is to chart transforming identities, focusing particularly on how illness affects personal relationships (Sharf & Vanderford, 2003). Choosing to keep Nai Nai's cancer a secret from her alters how all of the family members act around her. They must actively work to not show any of their own fear or grief so they do not reveal that they are lying to Nai Nai. In this sense, illness transforms their familial identity because all their interactions become centered around Nai Nai's cancer and making sure she does not find out about it. The narrative the family constructs also forces Billi to reevaluate her identity on an individual level. She does not agree with the decision to keep Nai Nai ignorant of her illness, which makes her an outlier to the rest of the family.

More specifically, Billi must negotiate between her Chinese heritage and her American upbringing. While having an argument with her uncle, he tells her that there are differences between how the United States and China perceive illness and death: "You think life belongs to oneself… In the East, a person's life is part of the whole." He challenges Billi's view that telling Nai-Nai the truth is the only correct option because she presumably holds this view since it is the norm in U.S. culture. Stibbe (1996) writes about the illness metaphors used in publications about Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). TCM states, "We should see tumors as the partial manifestation of general malaise and we should not see the parts and overlook the whole," which Stibbe connects to the recurring theme of balance in broader Chinese culture (p. 178). Billi's uncle's opinions reflect this deeply important cultural belief, so within the context of their conversation, he calls attention to Billi's Western ethnocentrism, or "attitude that one's own culture is better than others" (du Pré, 2017, p. 154). While Billi has always identified with her Chinese heritage, this experience makes her question if her U.S.-centric worldview has alienated her from her family and limited her ability to empathize with cultures outside the U.S.

Through its story of a single-family, *The Farewell* brings awareness to the multitude of challenges that families face when a loved one develops a life-threatening illness and how those challenges can be exacerbated across cultures. It explores the unique—and sometimes contested—roles a family can play in an attempt to show social support and the power constructing an illness narrative has in shaping the outcome of an illness. While it offers no easy answers about what is right and what is wrong (if such labels are even applicable) in handling a family member's illness, *The Farewell* makes one thing evident: when the health of one is in jeopardy, the entire family is at stake.

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Hannah Walsh, 9" x 12", marker

Six Foot Deep into the Gothic Subculture

Emma Clodfelter ***ENGL 343: Travel Writing***

"Six Feet Deep into the Gothic Subculture" is an immersion memoir, which means that it approaches the world as a means to illuminating the self. 6 traces her transformation from girl who dressed in all colors of the rainbow into a veteran Goth with laugh-out-loud humor (such as her opening observation that the Goth scene in Iowa is "deader than Bela Lugosi") and incisive reflection on the nuances of Goth bands and attire. A good memoir often shows change in a character and, by teaching us about that character's life, manages to teach us about our own. 6's journey throughout this essay is remarkable --a true coming-out story--but it also renders Goth culture comprehensible in ways that all readers can relate to their own friend groups and communities. It is ultimately an enduring and universal story.

- Joshua Dolezal

Goths. You've probably seen them somewhere. They're scattered across just about every country, higher concentrations congregating in some areas more than others. They've been around for over four decades, and no matter how their numbers may dwindle, regardless of how negatively the outside world may see them, they're still alive and kicking and will continue to do so for a very long time.

The Gothic subculture was a mystery to me for years, mostly because Goths are hardly ever represented in media (and when they are, it's often as the stereotypical gloomy teen that thinks moping around is synonymous with having a personality), and because the Goth scene in Iowa is deader than Bela Lugosi. When all you have to go off of is portrayals on TV and parent's disapproval of anything resembling an alternative lifestyle, it's no wonder that I, like many others, misunderstood this subculture.

"I can't believe someone would dress like that!" My narrowed eyes scrutinized the woman on the TV screen. Her hair must have been at least three different colors, none of them natural, and her face shined with piercings, each one like a beacon begging for attention. My dad echoed my complaints with a disapproving "Yeah." He used that tone children know so well, the tone parents use to describe someone unsavory, a tone often followed by "Don't ever turn out like that, dear. Those people don't go far in life." I was eleven at the time.

Eleven-year-old me was as girly as they came. You could count the times I wasn't in pink on one hand. My favorite place to beg Mom for new clothes was The Children's Place, which sold color-coordinated outfits in brilliant tones from every part of the rainbow. When I made my way to middle school, I lamented the fact that I was now too old to get my clothes there anymore. However, not only did the color-coordination stick, but it developed into themes as well. Kids from the early 2010s will undoubtedly remember Nyan Cat, the singing toaster pastry cat that left a trail of rainbows in its wake. I had a Nyan Cat t-shirt, Nyan Cat bracelet, four different Nyan Cat pins, and a Nyan Cat bottle cap necklace (that I made myself, no less). I wore all of them in the same outfit. Multiple times. To school.

Matching themed outfits made up the entirety of my wardrobe throughout middle school.This led to me wearing many different styles, from neon eighties nightmare to sophisticated nerd. My art teacher made note of this when she signed my eighth-grade yearbook, finding delight in my whimsical self-expression. Fourteen-year-old me had one problem, though—she described one of my looks as "Goth." I was ticked. Sure, metal and their arms covered in ink. Sure, skulls were one of the many things I had as a theme, and if a shirt I wore only had black, white, and red, then I

only wore those colors for that outfit, but that didn't mean I was "Goth." I wasn't like those people. I didn't like drugs or worship Satan. I wasn't some stupid teenager with their face full of metal and their arms covered in ink. At least, that's what my parents thought of them, and as I'd never met one, who was I to argue?

I can't quite remember what kicked off my interest in Goth, but I think the vampire trend was to blame. No, I never read *Twilight* or its sequels, but nonetheless, its popularity sparked a wave of vampire books, romance or otherwise. Vampires were usually depicted as wearing glamorous dark clothing, occasionally with a leaning towards Victorian fashion. Some were even explicitly described as being Goth. I explored this aesthetic through a Nintendo DS game called "Style Savvy" that I played religiously as a pre-teen. The object of the game was to run a boutique and pick out clothes for customers, whom all had a certain fashion category they fit into. One of these was Gothic lolita (labeled simply as "Gothic" for the Western version) and another was a bit of a cross between Emo and Goth. I dressed my character exclusively in these styles and even dyed her hair black. I spent more time on this game than I should have, given its limited gameplay, but it made me realize that I adored Goth fashion and wanted to dress that way in real life.

My second motive for adopting a spooky style was that it made me feel like I finally found a group where I fit in. Throughout middle school, I had been picked on for being annoying, loud, and hyper. Making friends was like casting a torn-up fishing net and hoping to catch something. Even though I settled down and traded my outspokenness for a quiet nature, the damage done to my reputation couldn't be repaired, and the boys who bullied me in middle school didn't seem to notice I had become less of a nuisance. Putting on black clothes and studs was like adorning armor. Although Goth kids do tend to get bullied for their nonconformity, my logic was that if I looked cool, and kind of scary, I would be left alone, because who wants to mess with the badass who wears a studded leather jacket with a safety-pin-skull on the back?

Goth is a music-based subculture, not fashion-based as many outsiders believe.

One day, I wore a black dress that had a white lace panel made to look like vertebrae at the back. I received two compliments, one of which was from the guy who had picked on me the most. He wasn't the type to give fake compliments, and his tone bore no resemblance to sarcasm. The other was a conversation I overheard between two boys in the hall as they walked behind me.

"Whoa, that girl has a spine on her dress."

"That's so metal."

My smile lit up the hallway.

Of course, it takes more than black clothes and thick eyeliner to be a Goth, but that was a lesson I wouldn't learn until I did further digging online. Goth is a music-based subculture, not fashion-based as many outsiders believe. It all started with the song "Bela Lugosi's Dead," released in 1979 by Bauhaus. This song would define the genre of post-punk, which, as the name implies, rose from the ashes of the dying punk scene in the UK. Post-punk soon gave way to goth rock, and from there, like a blot of black ink on parchment, it spread out into other iterations, ranging from deathrock to new wave to synth-pop. Industrial music mingled in as well, as did the rave music favored by cybergoths (or "gravers," as they used to be known), but both genres remained distinct from the whole of Goth music, considered more like cousins to the melancholy, atmospheric sounds and prominent bass guitar chords that make up theother subgenres (with the exception of EBM and synth-pop, which have an uncharacteristically upbeat tune and techno sound, despite the lyrics being just as dark and dreary as the others).

Naturally, to join a music-based subculture, one must listen to and enjoy the music. An ongoing problem for the Goth subculture is that too many newcomers skip this step and head straight for the visual aspect. More experienced Goths who have been active in the scene for a while will often try to encourage Babybats (new Goths) to dive into the rich music history, but they get met with claims of elitism and gate-keeping, to which they fire back with "poseur." I am ashamed to admit that I, too, tried to work my way in like a worm through an apple without having the faintest idea that Goth music even existed.

The present-day me, who has been Goth for six years, firmly believes that the foundation of Goth is the music. It's what started the whole subculture in the first place, and it continues to link together people from all around the world. New Goth music is still being made to this day, four decades after the initial release of "Bela Lugosi's Dead." I currently listen to over thirty bands that fall under the Goth umbrella, and I'm always looking to add to my options. The effect the music has on me is unlike anything else I've listened to. It flows into your blood, forces you to twirl your body, and sway to its hypnotic sound. It balances sadness with the desire to dance, raw emotion, and death with a yearning for romance. It's magical.

Foolishly, I did not start listening to the music until about a year into my involvement in the subculture. Here I was, with my fishnet tights, studded collars, and black dresses, yet I couldn't name a single band. Pfft, poseur. Afraid I'd be rejected if I met any real Goths, I convinced myself that Halloween Vocaloid songs on YouTube counted (no, past Emma, they don't count--not by a long shot). But, by sheer dumb luck--or YouTube's algorithm--a video was recommended to me. A music video, titled "Looking Glass" by a band called The Birthday Massacre. The name of the song piqued my interest, as it reminded me of Through the Looking-Glass, the sequel to Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, was one of my favorite stories. So, with curiosity at the helm, I clicked on the link. The band's black rabbit logo further solidified the Wonderland vibe, and although the song itself had nothing to do with Lewis Carroll's famous story, it ended up being exactly what I was looking for. The beat incorporated elements of rock and synth and carried an intense energy about it that sputtered in my heart. The video was drenched in creepy imagery that delighted me, from the identical, doll-like masks the extras wore to the black apple oozing red goo. Not only did it combine upbeat music with dark visuals, but it also took inspiration from anime (another love of mine), as the masks and uniforms were vaguely Japanese, and the lead singer uses the stage name of Chibi, an homage to Chibi Moon from the popular anime Sailor Moon.

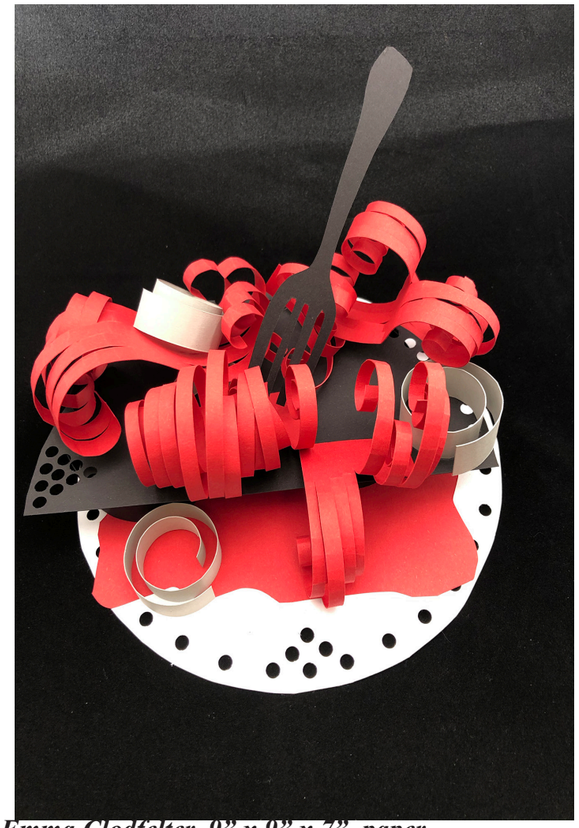
It turned out that to bridge the gap between the music I had grown up with and Goth music was synth. Sure, it's probably the least Goth of all the sub-genres, but it hooked me. Before Goth, I had enjoyed music I could really dance to, music that held powerful energy within it. Synth kept that energy and added futuristic and fantastical sounds, and the dark lyrics gave me a taste before the craving for more began. That allowed me to find value in slower, more melancholic tunes by other bands.

I watched all four of the music videos on The Birthday Massacre's channel that very night and each one had the same whimsical mix of energy, spookiness, and a little bit of magic. Dolls, rabbits, muted colors, black-haired girls in frilly dresses-- the aesthetic they created was one of a distorted fairy tale, and it resonated with me perfectly. I listened to more of their songs after that, seeking out lyric videos so I could follow along with Chibi's melodic voice. She had quite the range, able to sing powerfully, softly, angrily, or even by growling out the words, and it was equally as beautiful

every time. The Birthday Massacre became my favorite band and continues to be so to this day.

With the same enthusiasm as granted by a new crush, I eagerly sought out more bands. I quickly found a list of recommendations by a Goth online whose username was based off of a track The Birthday Massacre had played on their old website. The name Creature Feature was near the top and sounded promising enough, so I dove right in and played their most popular song, "The Greatest Show Unearthed." Whereas The Birthday Massacre sounded like the soundtrack to a dark, enchanted forest, Creature Feature was like Halloween itself became a person. Their lyrics had the same gory, monster-filled fun that my poetry did, ranging from zombies to grave robbers, so they were an instant hit with me. There is some debate about whether Creature Feature is actually Goth or just darkly-inclined. At the time, I didn't know the difference, but now I would say they aren't Goth but appeal to Goths. I would almost put The Birthday Massacre in the same boat, but synth has some overlap with the genre, so it's a little harder to tell. However, I hear many Goths praising both these bands, so I feel validated nonetheless.

The deeper I delved into Goth music, the more I enjoyed it. I finally felt like a real Goth. I still remember how happy I was when I could name ten Goth bands off the top of my head. Sure, they were the more well-known ones, but it was an accomplishment to a young Babybat. I held up a finger as I silently listed them off. "Bauhaus, Siouxsie and the Banshees, The Cure, The Sisters of Mercy…Alien Sex Fiend, Christian Death… Clan of Xymox, Echo and the Bunnymen…London After Midnight…She Past Away!" I bore the largest grin on my face as I congratulate myself. I had passed a milestone that I myself had set up, and I truly felt, for the first time, that I belonged. It was no longer a black suit of armor—it had seeped into my skin and fused to my soul. To even attempt to go back would be to abandon what had become such a big part of myself, a part I am incredibly proud of.



Emma Clodfelter, 9" x 9" x 7", paper

As I grew older, I became more involved in the arts-and-crafts aspect of Goth. At this point, I had accumulated clothing from Hot Topic and thrift stores that matched the aesthetic I was going for, but where's the fun in being a "Goth-in-a-box"—a cardboard cutout of all the other young alternative kids that also shop at Hot Topic? Goths online were always stressing the importance of customizing clothes and making your own accessories. Not only is it more affordable, but it gives you a one-of-a-kind piece that you poured love into and made to fit your own personal style. With this new source of motivation, I pulled my old sewing machine out of retirement and relearned how to sew. I also took up jewelry-making again (a hobby I had inherited from my mom), and my art began to reflect my love of monsters and spooky things. The percentage of handmade things in my arsenal skyrocketed. Sewing became one of my favorite things to do, and I became known as the "DIY Queen" by my friends, who even ask me for advice when crafting. My most notorious example was when I made my own prom dress. Naturally, it was black satin with red-and-black lace with skulls on it, bearing bell-sleeves, lace and black bows on the bodice, and a lace-trim choker with a crystal pendant (also handmade). When picking out the fabric at Joann Fabrics, my Mom had guided me to a different bolt of lace.

"I think this one would be better. I mean, you don't want it to look too Goth."

I replied, "Mom, I am Goth." That was the first time I'd said it out loud.

It seemed that if I never said it, my parents wouldn't notice. The changes in my wardrobe were so gradual that they wouldn't realize what was happening until it was too late, and I would often sneak accessories or wild lipstick colors in my bag and put them on at school, careful to remove them before coming home so my parents would be none the wiser. When I actually admitted it, when that one simple word exited my mouth like a raven trying to escape, my heart roared as if I had just spilled my biggest secret. As expected, my parents developed a strictness they had never shown before, refusing to buy me anything even remotely Goth, making me change clothes, and even feeling the need to tell me not to wear anything with skulls and bones on it to a funeral, which I wasn't going to do in the first place, because I'm not incompetent. My common sense never left—I knew full well that formal events, job interviews, funerals, and the like all have dress codes, and I adhered to them. My parents' insistence on telling me what to wear made me feel like they thought I was a child that didn't know any better, not a seventeen-year-old who long since learned to dress herself and had been doing so just fine. They also felt the need to ask me to change when there was no dress code, such as going shopping. Yeah, I sincerely doubt anyone at the mall is going to care that I'm in ripped tights and a Wednesday Addams dress.

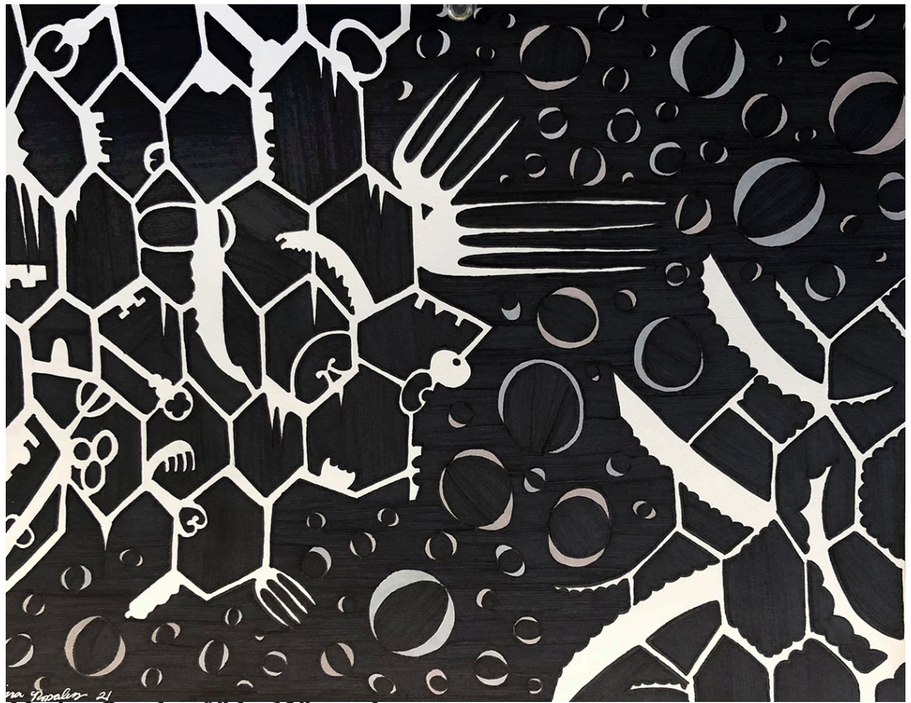
They disguised their judgment with concern, worried that other people would treat me like…well, like they were treating me. I have been insulted on five occasions if memory serves correct. The amount of compliments I've received dwarfs that number exponentially. I've been told by several that they used to dress like I do when they were in high school and that although it didn't stick with them, they love seeing it on someone else. An older teacher at my high school loved my look, as it reminded her of her adult daughter who had been Goth at some point. I get compliments from other alternative kids, from strangers, from teachers and professors, and from the cashiers who ring me up at stores. Some of the friends I've made in college only met me because they saw me from afar and thought I was interesting. I draw attention, but the kind that makes people curious about me rather than hateful. That's not to say no one has disliked my style, but at the very least, they kept it to themselves. I know that I've just been lucky, as many Goths face abuse, both verbal and physical, for the way they look. My go-to joke is that it's because I'm surrounded by Midwesterners, all of which are too "Iowa-nice" (myself included) to say something rude about someone's outfit. Besides, who wants someone that shallow in their life, anyway? As far as I'm concerned, I'm sorting those people out with appearances alone.

My parents have grown more tolerant of my lifestyle over the years, especially when they see me channeling it into my hobbies. They have even let me start dying my hair, something that would never have been allowed when I was younger. They haven't fully come around, but I no longer feel like I have to hide my identity from them. Of course, growing older and approaching

adulthood has certainly worked out in my favor. It's hard to tell your daughter not to wear something when she makes her own clothes using supplies that she bought with money she earned at her job. However, there are still those uncomfortable moments when they show distaste, such as when I paint something horror-related or sew a garment using fabric with a creepy pattern. I plaster a smile on my face and pretend it doesn't bother me, but little things can pile up.

The sky outside had faded into blackness as I sat in my room. Scrolling through social media, a post caught my eye. "Hi, I'm new to the Goth scene. Can anyone answer my questions?" I could. It had been six years since my first platform-boot-clad-steps into the subculture, and it brought a smile to my face to see how far I'd come. It's funny to look back at my Babybat self, someone who didn't even know who Peter Murphy was, couldn't tell Bauhaus from The Cure, who smeared thick black eyeliner over their lids and called it good, now able to confidently pave the way for a newcomer. I went on about where to find the music, where to buy clothes, ways to customize them, how to tell Goth and Emo apart, why dying their hair black was not a requirement, and so on and so forth. I felt I had integrated into the scene completely, and no matter what anyone else thinks, I'll always have a place among the Goths.

The sky outside had faded into blackness as I sat in my room. Scrolling through social media, a post caught my eye. "Hi, I'm new to the Goth scene. Can anyone answer my questions?" I could.



Marina Rosalez, 9" by 12", marker

Environmental Minimalism and Inspirational Wonder in *Paradise Lost*

Emma Chervek ***ENGL 425: Seminar in Literary Studies***

Emma wrote this paper for ENGL 425: Seminar in Literary Studies, which challenged students to produce a research paper that matched the quality of a critical article in the field. The topic of the course was *Paradise Lost*, John Milton's 1667 epic poem about the Fall, and Emma's critical article connects this old text to a pressing modern-day issue and shows how surprisingly current this 17th-century poem feels. The article is exceptionally well-researched, and it intervenes to fill a significant hole in Milton scholarship.

- Valerie Billing

Paradise Lost tells the story of the creation of the universe based on the Biblical account in the book of Genesis, focusing on Adam and Eve's early life in Eden: earth's ultimate paradise. This story is influenced by the natural characteristics of its setting and is therefore inseparable from the physical environment in which this story is set. An ecocritical reading of *Paradise Lost* is not only logical but necessary in order to understand the way Adam and Eve's natural environment contributes to their experiences as chronicled in Milton's epic. Although the development of the field of ecocriticism is relatively recent, there is a wealth of ecocritical research on *Paradise Lost*. Richard J. DuRocher writes about the Fall's "palpable effect on nature" as seen through Milton's repeated personification of a wounded earth (DuRocher 96). In another ecocritical reading of *Paradise Lost*, Nick Pici points out the pastoral characteristics found in parts of Milton's epic along with other green subtexts—including Adam and Eve's actions in Eden that could be viewed today as environmentally conscious— in order to argue that Adam and Eve are "earth's first environmentalists" (Pici 46). The language Pici uses to describe Adam and Eve's stewardship of Eden is reminiscent of the modern cultural movement of minimalism, which is often associated with modern environmental and sustainability movements. In my essay, I will argue that through Adam and Eve's actions, Milton creates a potent sense of wonder that serves as an inspiration for modern stewardship of the natural world. Milton uses the personified wounding of the earth to not only emphasize the trauma earth feels as a result of human sin, but also to illustrate the natural kinship between humans and the earth that is fractured when humanity falls. Environmentalism and minimalism are parts of the solution to this anthropogenic damage found in Milton's Eden and our world today. The tones of modern environmentalism and minimalism evident in Adam and Eve's Edenic actions inspire a sense of wonder that we might recapture if we model our lives after Milton's Adam and Eve.

Wounding the Landscape

Milton's personification of the earth shows the depth of impact caused by the Fall of man, not only on the earth itself but numerous aspects of creation. DuRocher contends that this personification transfers the focus away from the human plot and instead connects humanity and nature, showing that Adam and Eve's actions cause the earth to be tangibly wounded (DuRocher 95, 96). Building on DuRocher, I argue that this wound is both emotional and physical, a duality Milton makes apparent through his use of personification. When Eve falls, we get our first glimpse of how human action affects the earth:

So saying, her rash hand in evil hour
Forth reaching to the Fruit, she pluck'd, she eat:
Earth felt the Wound, and Nature from her seat
Sighing through all her Works gave signs of woe
That all was lost. (9.780-84).

In this passage, it is evident that when "Earth felt the Wound," its personified reaction is a direct result of Eve's disobedient act of eating the fruit (9.782). The Oxford English Dictionary defines "wound" as "an incision, abrasion, or other injury due to external violence" ("wound"). When Eve sins, she damages not only the fate of humankind but also the physical world through this injury. While preconceived notions of this Biblical story lead us to believe that Eve was deceived entirely by Satan disguised as a serpent, this passage from Milton's retelling of the traditional story shows that even though Satan may have convinced Eve to eat the fruit, she picked it from the tree with her own hand rather than simply accepting it from Satan (Milton 9.781). Eve had to put in additional effort to pluck the fruit herself before eating it; this action enforces the anthropogenic identity of Eve's sin. After the earth is wounded, Milton depicts nature—an element of the earth—as "sighing" (9.783). In the *OED*, a "sigh" is defined as "a sudden, prolonged, deep and more or less audible respiration, following on a deep-drawn breath, and esp. indicating or expressing dejection, weariness...pain" ("sigh"). This definition elevates the intensity of the damage caused by Eve's action. The earth is not only physically wounded, but experiences other emotions such as pain and dejection. The conclusion of this passage is that "all was lost" as a result of Eve's sin (Milton 9.784). In this context, "lost" most closely refers to something "that has perished or been destroyed; ruined, esp. morally or spiritually" ("lost"). This word implies a tone of finality that corresponds with the *OED*'s definition of "lost." Eve, through her disobedience to God, begins a process of ruin that leads to the earth's hopeless feeling that all is lost.

In the following passage, we see anthropogenic damage that manifests in an emotional manner. After Adam follows Eve's example and eats of the fruit, the

Earth trembl'd from her entrails, as again
In pangs, and Nature gave a second groan,
Sky low'r'd, and muttering Thunder, some sad drops
Wept at completing if the mortal Sin
Original. (9.1000-1004).

Sabrina Tallman, glass

In this passage earth, nature, and weather are personified for the same aim: to show the emotional rift between humanity and nature created in that moment of mortal sin. The earth "trembl'd," a word defined by the *OED* as "to shake involuntarily as with fear or other emotion, cold, or weakness" ("tremble"). "Trembl'd" implies sin is an entity terrifying enough to render the earth weak, even if momentarily. There is irony in the idea of a grand celestial body such as the earth shaking in fear; it's an absurd image opposite from the harmonious relationship we witness earlier in the epic between humanity and the garden. Next, Milton writes that "Nature gave a second groan" (Milton 9.1001). In this context, "groan" most closely means "a low deep sound expressive of grief or pain" according to the *OED* ("groan"). As a result of Adam and Eve's sin, nature experiences pain made tangible through the use of personification. Grief and pain are strong sensations and show

the magnitude of emotional damage caused by sin. In this passage, there is also imagery commonly associated with childbirth, a process altered after the Fall to be extremely painful and emotionally difficult as a punishment for Eve's sin. "Pangs" and "groan" both carry connotations of childbirth, insinuating that the aftermath of humanity's sin is similar to a commonly painful human experience (Milton 9.1001). The natural world and humanity face similar consequences through the childbirth-esque pain they feel, although that pain is not unifying; it is divisive. There are also emotional wounds referenced through the weather on earth after the Fall; the "[s]ky low'r'd, and muttering Thunder, some sad drops / Wept" (9.1003-4). An initial analysis reveals these lines are referencing rain, a weather phenomenon personified as weeping: a word with a tone synonymous to that of the words I've previously examined from this passage. Although rain is often associated with a refreshing gift of new life, in this context it is a natural phenomenon that exudes sorrow and grief. The word "sad" is worth further note, however, as it functions as a pun; there are multiple meanings of the word that may be applicable in this context. First is the modern definition of "feeling sorrow of regret" ("sad"). This option corresponds with previous observations about the personification of the sky crying. "Sad," however, can also mean "mature, serious, grave" ("sad"). This second meaning, relevant during the time Milton wrote *Paradise Lost*, is perhaps more jarring than the modern meaning in this context. While the first implies that even the weather feels the sorrow of humanity's actions, the second meaning implies that the tears the sky is weeping are serious, meaning that they understand the complexity and degree of the circumstances about to come to fruition rather than simply feeling sorrow or regret. The attribution of this knowledge and understanding to the natural world makes the tears the sky cries even more meaningful. There is great emotional damage as a result of sin that separates humanity from nature.

Along with the emotional damages discussed in the previous section, there are also physical "changes in the heav'ns" that did not occur until after the Fall of humankind (Milton 10.692). One of these is that the tilting of "[t]he poles of the earth twice ten degrees and more / From the sun's axle" (10.669-70). This refers to the 23.5° tilt of the earth's axis that makes possible the annual weather and temperature fluctuations known as seasons; DuRocher argues this is an example of how the earth is "physically afflicted" after the Fall (DuRocher 101). Another example is that

The sun
Had first his precept so to move, so shine
As might affect the Earth with cold and heat
Scarce tolerable and from the north to call
Decrepit winter, from the south to bring
Solstitial summer's heat. (10.651-657).

Here, we see that the sun moves location in the universe after the Fall, affecting the previous moderate and consistent global climate of the prelapsarian world. As a result of humanity's actions, the climate changed in detrimental ways. Winter is personified as "decrepit," which the *OED* defines as "wasted or worn out with old age, decayed and enfeebled with infirmities" ("decrepit"). This language does not portray an oasis akin to the garden; instead, this addition of different seasons shows the changed earth as a sickened wasteland as a result of humanity's Fall.

Milton's references to environmental destruction and damages are not only those concerning Eden and humanity's sin but also those that take place in Hell:

Mammon led them on,
Mammon the least erected spirit that fell
From Heav'n, for ev'n in Heav'n his looks and thoughts
Were always downward bent, admiring more
The riches of Heav'n's pavement, trodden gold,
Than aught divine or holy else enjoyed
In vision beatific. By him first
Men also, and by his suggestion taught,
Ransacked the center and with impious hands
Rifled the bowels of their mother Earth
For treasures better hid. Soon had his crew
Opened into the hill a spacious wound
And digged out ribs of gold. (Milton 1.678-90)

This passage begins by detailing Mammon's history of extreme greed and his admiration for material things, such as gold, that closely resembles worship. This admiration of "riches" is in opposition to the expected object of worship for a supposedly "divine or holy" angel: God. It is Mammon's avarice that leads him to eventually teach humanity to dig into the earth and extract its natural resources for personal (and often monetary) gain. This is a direct reference to the influx of mining during Milton's lifetime, a practice that was detrimental to the environment and the earth's natural resources. In the seventeenth century, the Portuguese, with an intent to exploit the natural resources of Brazil, found large amounts of gold and initiated an expansive mining industry. They used the labor of hundreds of thousands of Portuguese and African slaves and aided in the deforestation of the Atlantic Forest habitat (Gilbert 40). Additionally, seventeenth-century Sweden was one of the most historically important mining regions in Europe and caused large amounts of water pollution; those effects are still noticeable today in Sweden's lakes and the Baltic Sea (Bindler et al.) The strong language Milton uses in this passage shows his criticism of environmentally harmful activities such as mining. He uses the verbs "ransacked" and "rifled" to describe the act of extracting natural resources from the earth. According to the *OED*, "ransacked" means "to search (a place, person, etc.) with intent to rob, esp. roughly or carelessly, so as to cause damage or disorder in the process" ("ransack"). Similarly, "rifled" is defined in the *OED* as "to rob or strip bare of something" ("rifle"). These verbs instill the malicious intent Milton aims to ascribe to the mining industry in order to criticize it. He also personifies the earth in this passage; it is referred to as "mother Earth" and has "ribs of gold" (Milton 1.687, 1.690). This personification is a precursor to the personification of the wounded earth referenced with the Fall of humanity. Here, Milton refers to the mine itself as "a spacious wound," the same term he uses later to describe the effect of humanity's sin on the natural world (1.689). Connecting these two events (mining and the Fall of humanity) demonstrates how damaging mining practices truly are; they are parallel to disobeying God. Mammon is clearly an antagonist in this passage, and his obsession with wealth sets us up to feel relieved and refreshed at reading how Adam and Eve interact harmoniously with nature in Eden before the Fall. It is important to understand the ways the earth is wounded—emotionally and physically—in order to search earnestly for what Milton poses as a solution to this environmental destruction.

Milton's Response: Environmentalism and Minimalism in *Paradise Lost*

I've discussed how Milton's use of personification highlights the major problem: the disconnect created between humans and nature as a result of the original mortal sin. Next, I will look at a possible solution Milton poses for this problem. By detailing even the mundanest of their actions, Milton casts Adam and Eve as responsible environmental stewards of Eden and foreshadows a partial fix for the damage caused by mortal sin. As Ellen Goodman argues, "Milton develops a view of the unfallen relations between Adam and Eve and their subjects which redefines the ideal conditions of human life in the natural world" (Goodman 9). Building on Goodman, I will argue Milton is suggesting a cure for environmental destruction by showing an ideal in Adam and Eve and in the pastoral poetry that he uses to describe the garden and their interactions with it. Adam and Eve are depicted as models of environmentalism and minimalism, which shows the methods Milton believes can offer a solution to the anthropogenic rupture between humanity and nature.

By detailing even the mundanest of their actions, Milton casts Adam and Eve as responsible environmental stewards of Eden and foreshadows a partial fix for the damage caused by mortal sin.

The pastoral genre of poetry is prevalent in *Paradise Lost* and is Milton's way of depicting the beauty of the natural world. It is within the pastoral verse in Milton's epic that he describes Adam and Eve within Eden. These portions of the epic are "suffused with rich, intoxicating imagery, resplendent detail, and lyrical language" and are "used to paint pictures of an iridescent Eden replete with beauty and enticing natural treasures" (Pici 36). This iridescent picture of Eden that affects a wide range of characters is what motivates Adam and Eve to color their behaviors with themes of environmentalism. Pici's argument focuses primarily on environmental themes in Milton's epic, providing numerous examples of Adam and Eve's actions that are reminiscent of modern environmentalist practices. He notes that "balance, moderation, and temperance encode the lives of Adam and Eve in Paradise," and "that these inhabitants of Paradise are vegetarians, gardeners, and practitioners of modern, conscientious living" (Pici 46). These traits are all things that could be applied to the modern environmentalist.

Adam and Eve practice multiple behaviors that can be classified as environmentally conscious. One of these is related to their diet; they are vegans and there is no evidence that they consume meat, dairy, or animal products. It is mentioned many times that Adam and Eve are allowed to eat "[o]f the fruit / Of each tree in the garden," but eating meat and killing or harming animals is never mentioned (9.590-60). Rather than exerting their power over creatures of the earth by using them for sustenance, Adam and Eve fulfill their dietary needs using the garden's natural vegetation. Pici builds on this idea, noting that they take only what they need from the garden (Pici 45). This illustrates Adam and Eve's adherence to the principles of moderation in that they do not exploit the garden's resources for their own selfish gain. Both of these concepts—plant-based diets and respecting the natural resources of the earth—are key components of the modern environmental movement.

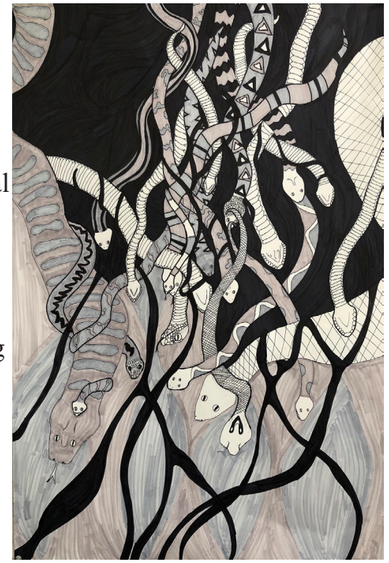
The idea that Adam and Eve are environmentalists, however, can be taken further. While Pici doesn't explicitly argue the following, there is evidence in his article that leads to the conclusion that Adam and Eve adopt a minimalist lifestyle similar to that which has gained popularity in modern culture around the globe. Kyle Chayka, a writer who regularly covers the cultural trend of minimalism, defines the phenomenon as "a lifestyle of…being happy with, and more aware of, what you already own" (Chayka). While arguing that Adam and Eve are environmentalists, Pici mentions that they "structure their lives while in Eden according to rather strict principles of moderation," which is a common characteristic of modern minimalism (Pici 45). Building on Pici's observation, I argue Adam

and Eve model minimalist behaviors in addition to their environmentalist behaviors.

Adam and Eve are exemplars of minimalist ideals through what we see of their daily routine. Adam speaks to Eve in the evening, saying,

> Tomorrow ere fresh morning streak the east
> With first approach of light we must be ris'n
> And at our pleasant labor to reform
> Yon flow'ry arbors, yonder alleys green,
> Our walk at noon with branches overgrown… (Milton 4.623-27)

Adam describes the morning as "fresh," which is a positive appreciation of the gift of the day's newness (4.623). He narrates how he and Eve will wake up "[w]ith first approach of light" and without any need for mechanical or man-made assistance such as the alarm clocks that we commonly use today; the natural light of the sun is sufficient (4.624). Shortly after waking up, they begin their "pleasant labor," and are able to find joy in tending for the garden (4.625). "Pleasant" is defined by the *OED* as "merry, light-hearted," implying that the modern negative connotation associated with the idea of physical labor does not exist in Eden ("pleasant"). Adam and Eve enjoy the work they are tasked with doing in order to sustain themselves, which is congruent with modern ideas of minimalism. Moreover, Adam and Eve are not bothered with wearing clothing, and they go to sleep without "putting off / These troublesome disguises which we wear" (4.739-40). This ultimate lack of material possessions is one of the most important pillars of a minimalist lifestyle.



Que Baker-McCaulay, 22" x 30", marker

Paradise Lost advocates for the minimalist simplicity of living in harmony with nature, an idea strikingly similar to Leo Marx's definition of the pastoral: "the desire, in the face of growing complexity and power of organized society, to disengage from the dominant culture and to seek the basis for a simpler, more harmonious way of life 'closer' (as we say) to 'nature'" (Pici 36). Milton's pastoral poetry is a method for showing the beauty and power of the natural world. One particularly striking pastoral passage describes the natural phenomena of evening:

> Whether the prime orb,
> Incredible how swift, had thither rolled
> Diurnal or this less voluble earth
> By shorter flight to th' east had left him there
> Arraying with reflected purpl' and gold
> The clouds that on his western throne attend.
> Now came still evening on and twilight grey
> Had in her sober livery all things clad.
> Silence accompanied, for beast and bird,
> They to their grassy couch, these to their nests
> Were slunk – all but the wakeful nightingale.

> She all night long her amorous descant sung:
> Silence was pleased. Now glowed the firmament
> With living sapphires. Hesperus that led
> The starry host rode brightest till the Moon,
> Rising in clouded majesty, at length
> Apparent queen, unveiled her peerless light
> And o'er the dark her silver mantel threw. (Milton 4.592-609)

The entirety of this passage focuses on a quite common occurrence—nightfall—yet describes it as anything but common. Any possible mundanity associated with nature's daily evening routine is ignored, and these events are instead held in reverence and colored with words of admiration. Milton highlights the extreme beauty of nature during nighttime, comparing stars to "living sapphires" (4.605). He describes these celestial bodies as akin to precious jewels, a comparison meant to emphasize the physical beauty and sense of awe felt upon witnessing stars in the night sky. Milton narrates the movement of the moon across the starlit sky as "[r]ising in clouded majesty" (4.607). The *OED* defines "majesty" as "greatness, dignity, power," giving great significance to the moon and continuing to venerate objects of nature ("majesty"). There is a great sense of peace when "silence accompanied" and every creature sleeps apart from "the wakeful nightingale" (4.600, 4.602). This passage takes on a slow tone of contentment; "silence was pleased" at the song the nightingale sings while the rest of Eden slumbers. Milton spends many lines on this description, showing how important he feels this silent, peaceful night is. This careful consideration of the beauty found in silence is consistent with ideas of minimalism and how it ties to environmentalism.

This passage, however, could be seen as complicating ideas of minimalism since its language aligns with themes of extravagance, referencing expensive jewels and excesses of beauty. I would counter that the beauty admired is natural rather than man-made, which continues to support the idea that Adam and Eve are minimalists. Here, Adam and Eve appreciate what they have without yearning for excess. Although Milton describes the peaceful nightfall in extravagant terms, Adam and Eve cherish its beauty at face value, echoing Chayka's definition of minimalism.

There is much we can learn from the methods Adam and Eve employ. Jia Tolentino draws connections between environmentalism and minimalism, saying that following a minimalistic lifestyle is a way for us to fix the environmental issues we face; "with less noise in our heads, we might hear the emergency sirens more clearly. We might address the frantic, frightening, intensifying conditions that have prompted us to think of minimalism as an attractive escape" (Tolentino). By identifying positive behaviors that help foster a connection between humanity and nature, Milton uses Adam and Eve to inspire his audience's sense of environmental wonder and desire to preserve the natural beauty of the earth.

Preserving Wonder

Rachel Carson, a famous conservationist, environmental activist, and nature writer came to the following conclusion shortly before her death in 1964: "It is a wholesome and necessary thing for us to turn again to the Earth and in the contemplation of her beauties to know the sense of wonder and humility" (Weyler). The idea of wonder frequently sparks the yearning for environmental conservation and preservation (Remien 817). Wonder is a powerful force that is often evoked through Milton's use of pastoral poetry and descriptions of nature in *Paradise Lost* and affects Satan, Adam and Eve, and Milton's reader.

Satan, upon his arrival in Eden, is greatly affected by Edenic beauty and the feelings of

wonder it universally provokes. Remien argues that in his moments of pause, Satan is forced "to confront the profound beauty of that which he is compelled to destroy," and that "wonder dilates poetic description as a method for temporarily delaying Eden's destruction through the creation of an elegy to that which was lost in The Fall" (Remien 818). The awe-inspired by Eden's pure beauty is so powerful that even Satan, a character with ill intent, is struck with reverence:

Grace Teig, repurposed aluminum

> Beneath him with new wonder now he views
> To all delight of human sense exposed
> In narrow room Nature's whole wealth, yea more,
> A Heav'n on Earth, for blissful Paradise
> Of God the garden was by Him in th' east
> Of Eden planted. (Milton 4.205-10)

This passage is right after Satan arrives on earth and glimpses Eden for the first time. Satan has clear goals of harming Adam and Eve; while perched on the Tree of Life he "sat devising death / To them who lived" (4.197-98). Amidst his evil scheming and despite his harmful intentions, he experiences a "new wonder" upon taking in the beauty of Eden (4.205). The *OED* defines "wonder" as "something that causes astonishment" ("wonder"). The "blissful Paradise" of the garden accomplishes a great feat in these lines: its beauty manages to momentarily supersede the typical wickedness of Satan's mind (Milton 4.208). The existence of this wonder shows the broadness of the power of nature and the natural environment—not even the devil is exempt from reveling in the beauty of the earth.

Modern audiences often consider "wilderness" to be positively associated with wonder and adventure; however, I would like to note an important distinction when talking about natural language and the term "wilderness" in particular. The idea of wilderness is prevalent in Milton's epic and exists as a contrast between his time and ours. As Christopher Hitt mentions in his overview of ecocriticism, Pici, like other ecocritics, through his disregard of possible contradictions to his argument, has romanticized the idea of the wilderness of Eden (Hitt 132). William Cronon writes about wilderness in relation to *Paradise Lost* and how the word did not mean the same thing during the time of the epic's development as compared to its modern definition (Cronon). According to the *OED*, wilderness would have been defined during Milton's time as "a wild or uncultivated region or tract of land, uninhabited, or inhabited only by wild animals; a tract of solitude and savageness" ("wilderness"). This coincides with Milton's usage of the word; in his epic, he uses wilderness to reference the physical environment surrounding Eden, describing it as "a steep wilderness whose hairy sides / With thicket overgrown, grotesque, and wild" (Milton 4.135-136). In Milton's time and this usage, in particular, Cronon notes that wilderness's "connotations were anything but positive" (Cronon). In *Paradise Lost*, wilderness represents the dangerous unknown surrounding the oasis of Eden. By arguing that humans "desire and generally need to carve out a niche among the raw wilderness of nature," Pici twists the "grotesque" quality of the wilderness into which Adam and Eve are thrust after the Fall into a necessity for "rich, meaningful, salubrious lives" (Pici 39). In Milton's epic, the wilderness represents the desolation and destruction that follows the Fall of man when Adam and Eve are banished from Paradise into the wilderness and a life without the same type of connection to God and nature they enjoyed before the Fall.

Milton's pastoral poetry in *Paradise Lost* reveals the sense of wonder he feels at observing his own natural environment. As Clifford J. Cunningham notes, there are multiple allusions to the natural phenomenon of the aurora borealis, commonly known as the Northern Lights. The following passage is a description of the aurora borealis as it appears in heaven:

> Far in th' horizon to the north appeared
> From skirt to skirt a fiery region stretched
> In battalious aspect and, nearer view,
> Bristled with upright beams innumerable. (Milton 6.79-82)

It is logical that Milton would be interested in a scientific stance on nature. In his epic, he references Galileo three separate times, and during Milton's lifetime, there were ample written sources describing the aurora borealis (Cunningham 6, 16). Even if Milton didn't have an opportunity to personally view the aurora borealis, it is likely he was aware of its existence and revered beauty. This passage is just one of the many allusions to the aurora borealis throughout *Paradise Lost*, which shows the magnitude of influence this aspect of nature had on him. The sense of wonder Milton felt at either viewing or hearing descriptions of the aurora borealis inspired him to include allusions to it in his epic with the aim of using elements of nature to inspire his audiences.

Milton's epic aims to show modern audiences the worth of Adam and Eve's environmentally conscious behaviors. In reference to Adam and Eve's actions in the garden, Pici contends that "it is probably more crucial for our current world, one that is facing pronounced and increasingly dire environmental crises, to consider and attempt to enact such ideas, practices, and visions" (Pici 35). One of the ways the wonder from Milton's epic has translated into the modern world is through the many natural parks that are commonly associated with awe and wonder; these are often referred to as an Eden. Yosemite Valley is one example of this trend. Mark Stoll writes that "as Eden, Yosemite Valley called up religious feelings and became a place to worship, a temple made by divine hands" (Stoll 238). The wonder felt by visitors to this region commonly referred to as Eden functions as an inspiration for environmental conservation and preservation because of the religious-esque experience it evokes; in fact, this is how the Sierra Club, an environmental advocacy group, came to existence. Adam and Eve felt about Eden similarly to how modern national park visitors feel about the nature they find themselves immersed within. Eve, for example, is a naturally curious human being. While declaring her devout love of Adam, she experiences wonder at the sight of the stars, asking "[b]ut wherefore all night long shine these? For whom / This glorious sight when sleep hath shut all eyes?" (Milton 4.657-58). She knows that living creatures sleep at night and are therefore unable to witness the beauty of the stars that adorn the night sky. The stars' persistent presence puzzles her, and she is shown as a creature of complex thought and deep wonder as a result of the natural phenomena that color her world. This is reminiscent of Milton's probable response to the aurora borealis; wonder is powerful enough to inspire deep connections between humanity and nature.

Milton, in an attempt to teach us how to begin to repair the environmental destruction our world faces, depicts Paradise as perfect and Adam and Eve as responsible stewards who follow practices of environmental minimalism. While it is not plausible that we might regain the earthly perfection of Eden, there are steps we can take and practices we can adopt to preserve the beauty of nature so it sustains the following cycle: nature's beauty will inspire humanity to preserve the natural world so it can continually inspire wonder in future generations who will be moved to dutifully care for our planet following Adam and Eve's Edenic example.

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The Realm of Faeries: Queerness and Neurodivergence in *Jane Eyre*

Grace Patrick-West

ENGL 425: Seminar in Literary Studies

In this essay, Grace posits one of the most original and fascinating arguments I’ve encountered in students work: that, through the Irish fairy motifs that abound *Jane Eyre,* Brontë represents her heroine’s queerness and neurodivergence. The brilliance of this essay lies in the depth of its research and Grace’s command of its material—that and the innovative way Grace intervenes in scholarship. For, as they writes in their introduction, scholars have written about Irish fae in *Jane Eyre*, they’ve written about Jane’s queerness, and they’ve written about her as neurodivergent. However, no one has thought that perhaps all of these might actually work together, or that, in fact, the fairy motifs allow Brontë to represent the queerness and neurodivergence of her heroine. Grace also performs creative and rich close readings of the text, which are compellingly compared to tales and tropes of Irish folklore.

- Kate Nesbit

During the Victorian era, interest in faeries began to peak. With the Brontë family connection to Ireland, Charlotte Brontë’s inclusion of faery lore in her novel *Jane Eyre* is quite useful in understanding her connection to both the time period she lived in and to her Irish lineage. As Carole Silver states, “For the Irish, especially those involved in the Celtic revival, belief in fairies was a political and cultural necessity,” demonstrating the importance that faeries had during the Victorian era from a Celtic perspective (141). While many scholars have looked at the intention behind folklore included in *Jane Eyre* as symbolic in various ways, none have approached faeries as evidence that Jane as a character is queer and neurodivergent. Neurodivergence refers to a difference in mental function from what is considered historically typical or normal (frequently used with reference to autistic spectrum disorders). Other scholars have also looked at Jane as a queer character, or as autistic, yet there have been no connections between these arguments the faery themes in the novel. By observing these gaps in scholarly approach, I seek to connect Celtic faeries with the arguments of Jane’s queerness and neurodivergence.

Throughout the relationship between Jane and Rochester, and even earlier in the chronology of the novel, fairies are an integral part of Jane’s identity as queer and neurodivergent. From Jane’s childhood, the connection with faeries is immediately established, as Jacqueline Simpson recalls, “In the course of the book we find that Bessie has filled Jane’s mind with omens, dreams, elf-lore and ghostly black dogs; the fruits of this imaginative awakening remain long after Jane has ceased literally to believe in such creatures,” an aspect of the novel that continuously emphasizes the underlying faery themes within the otherwise grounded narrative (47). Even the name of Rochester’s domicile, Thornfield Hall, can be interpreted as a reference to the hawthorn tree, a plant commonly thought to be sacred to and protected by faeries. Throughout the novel, faeries are mentioned continuously. However, the most prevalent context in which they are discussed is in comparing Jane to a faery. Charlotte Brontë writes about Rochester’s pet names for Jane, listing terms such as “‘provoking puppet,’ ‘malicious elf,’ ‘sprite,’ changeling,’ etc.” in relation to her character (199). Exploring the cultural significance of Irish fae is important in understanding other parts of Jane’s queerness and neurodivergence.

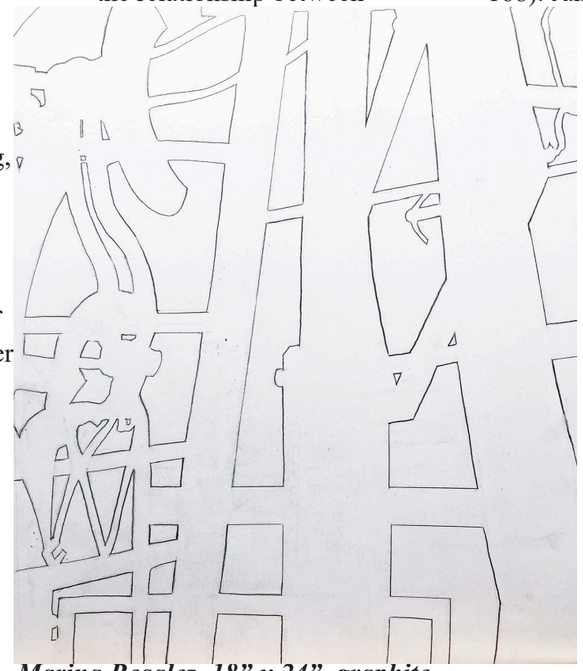
Irishness and the Brontës

Charlotte Brontë's connections to Celtic folklore originated based upon her family lineage. Patrick Brontë, the father of the Brontë sisters, was born in Ireland with the last name Brunty, before changing his last name while attending St. John's College in Cambridge ("Reverend Patrick Brontë"). Kathleen Constable writes about this name change by explaining the motivation of Irish people like Patrick Brontë, who "wished to establish some semblance of social position and thus were quick to amend their Irish names to more Anglicized versions," which shows his rejection of Irishness as a product of the society he lived in (25). Changing the Brontë family name influenced power dynamics, as the Irish name Brunty impeded the family's pursuit of status, while changing it both concealed their origins and protected them from anti-Irish sentiments. One could draw similarities to the power of naming in faery lore, with the idea of power held in a name specifically described as faeries often bringing bad luck to people who referred to them as Sidhe ("The Sidhe, the Tuatha de Danaan, and the Fairies in Yeats's Early Works"). As Constable later argues of Charlotte's relationship with Irishness, many examples of literary works by the eldest Brontë sister are connected to Irish symbols (60). Enthusiasts of the Brontë sisters can trace Charlotte's passion for her heritage, which is described thusly: "a clue to Charlotte Brontë's early affinity with things Irish may be found in her juvenile works, beginning in 1829 with the *Adventure in Ireland*" (Constable 60). It is quite fitting then that Charlotte Brontë would utilize Irish folklore as a motif in her novel *Jane Eyre* to reconnect with her heritage.

While Patrick Brontë attempted to separate himself from his Irishness, Charlotte's approach to her lineage was one of curiosity and disobedience to her father, most noticeable in her eventual marriage: "Charlotte had rejected a marriage proposal from her father's curate, the Reverend Arthur Bell Nicholls, and Patrick was incensed by the mere thought of the poor Irishman pursuing his famous daughter," which inspired Charlotte to later accept Nicholls's proposal ("Family History"). Charlotte Brontë's interest in Ireland also motivated her interest in faeries. Silver mentions her opinion on faeries during the Victorian era as supportive of the rural settings of Ireland as more comfortable for faeries with the statement, "Many agreed with the geologist Hugh Miller (222-23) and the novelist Charlotte Brontë (576) that the fairies were leaving England," as England's urbanization was damaging to the faeries (142). Interestingly, Charlotte Brontë's interest in the Celtic fae, called sidhe, is mentioned during a recounting of her tale "The Search for Happiness," with Constable drawing a parallel between the protagonist's journey and stating that "it also is strongly reminiscent of the tales of the *sidhe*...the former gods of ancient Ireland" (66). In examining the other references to Celtic faery lore, it becomes evident that early in her works, even before writing *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë was using Irish narratives of faeries and folklore in her writing. Even in *Jane Eyre*, the location that Rochester proposes she go to is in Ireland, with him stating, "I have already, through my future mother-in-law, heard of a place I think will suit: it is to undertake the education of the five daughters of Mrs Dionysius O'Gall of Bitternutt Lodge, Connaught, Ireland" (Brontë 182). This indicates the possibility that Jane as an Irish faery could possibly be more at home in Ireland than at Thornfield Hall, in Rochester's opinion. Another element of Irish faery lore that is often used in *Jane Eyre* is the changeling, or the faery child exchanged for a human child. The explanation of changelings intrinsically connects to anti-Irish sentiment, with Silver describing this as, "[Changelings] were especially prevalent among the Irish-whom most English saw as another superstitious, primitive, and backward race" (87). The difficulty in separating changeling myths from association with Ireland further strengthens the idea of these creatures representing any outsider figures at all. The changeling folklore is most simply a tale of faeries stealing children and leaving another child, a faery itself, the aforementioned changeling, as a replacement ("Changeling"). Often the behavior of the child will drastically change, often aligning with symptoms of learning disabilities or other neurological disabilities.

Changelings: Jane as a Neurodivergent Faery

Throughout the novel, Brontë compares Jane to a changeling. Now, speculative sources see both the novel and changeling lore as possible tales to explain disability and neurodivergence. As various academic circles study neurodivergence further, the link between changeling lore and autism has become a divisive topic. J Leask says of this idea, "The legends were society's attempt to make sense of, and cope with, child disability, providing a coherent explanation for its occurrence," explaining the connections between the changeling lore and autistic traits as a means of coping for parents with neurodivergent or disabled children (271). Leask also states, "folkloric heritage suggests the existence of autism long before its formal recognition in 1943," before further describing the relationship between changelings and autism by observing, "The new child—the changeling—is characterised by unresponsiveness, resistance to physical affection, obstreperousness, inability to express emotion, and unexplained crying and physical changes such as rigidity and deformity. Some are unable to speak" (271). Some of these traits can also apply to Jane's behavior and characteristics throughout the novel.



Marina Rosalez, 18" x 24", graphite

From an early age, it appears that Jane has difficulty behaving in a neurotypical fashion. When she visits her dying aunt, she is accused of having an "incomprehensible disposition," and her aunt states that her behavior as a child was hard to manage (Brontë 168). Jane's abuse at the hands of her aunt is also acknowledged by changeling lore, with the statement that so-called changeling children "are often scapegoated and abused" (Silver 76). Even today, many neurodivergent children face abuse from family and peers because of their supposedly incomprehensible behavior. This lends support to the idea of Jane as a changeling, as the most typical stories of the creatures relate to children being replaced, with their behavior becoming difficult to understand from an adult perspective, often resulting in mistreatment similar to Jane's childhood experiences.

One real life case of abuse inflicted upon an accused changeling involves a woman named Bridget Cleary. Silver recounts the story: "Bridget had been suffering from some form of mental illness, and when the services of a local priest and doctor proved ineffectual, a frustrated Michael Cleary turned to other means"

(64). These “other means” included treatments such as forcing Bridget “ to swallow a concoction of milk and herbs while a more odious mixture of water, urine, and hen’s excrement was repeatedly sprinkled on her body,” which is just one of many severely abusive ways to drive away changelings (Silver 64). Tragically, this abuse ended in Bridget Cleary’s death. The idea of Jane being misunderstood, leading to abuse at the hands of people she trusts, lends itself both to changeling connections and the autistic traits that she displays. As Leask states, “Most tales of changelings contain instructions on how to prevent the child being stolen, ways of determining whether the child is a changeling, and instructions on how to manage their behaviour” (271). The approach to preventing and treating changelings is similar to rhetoric around autism as neurotypical people, seeking explanations and treatments for autism, supervise self-proclaimed autism networks and charities such as Autism Speaks[1]. This idea of managing and trying to understand neurodivergent people is still prevalent. Silver says of the focus of changeling lore, “Power, in the form of social dominance, also plays a considerable role in explaining the interest of sceptical, educated, middle-class Victorians in reading about these brutal incidents,” referring back to the harsh treatment of people considered changelings (67). On a basic level, changeling accusations centered around control, much like the modern approaches to autistic individuals. In an attempt to force “normal” behavior from changelings and autistic people, the method of violence proves most effective. However, these methods ultimately damage the physical and psychological safety of the victims of such abuse.

Jane Eyre as an autistic character has only recently become a topic of discussion in critical debate, as more scientific advances are still being made in studying autism. However, the attitudes that provide evidence for Jane’s possible coding as autistic have been central in criticism of the novel both during Charlotte Brontë’s lifetime and after. As Julia Miele Rodas points out, “From its first publication in 1848 and persistently throughout the century and a half that has followed, critics and theorists have commented on the idiosyncratic nature of Jane’s feelings and reactions, on her unconventional approach to relationships, and on the singularly remote, withdrawn, or unattractive quality of her social intercourse,” a common critique of the novel’s protagonist that can be interpreted in a variety of ways (2). While the narrative is told from a first person perspective, Jane seems to cut herself off and have reservations when sharing her thoughts and feelings. While some people might interpret this use of narratorial voice as a frame for the readerly address and a set-up for a possibly unreliable narrator, others have begun considering other explanations.

I argue that developing Jane’s personality as Rodas describes supports the autistic coding of Jane’s character. Rochester points out Jane’s emotional ineptitude when he says, “You never felt jealousy, did you, Miss Eyre? Of course not: I need not ask you; because you never felt love,” which points to the inability to relate to others that is often associated with autism (Brontë 104). Jane continuously struggles to discuss her feelings openly, and her ignorance of Rochester’s affections until his proposal also indicates trouble understanding the emotions of others in a social atmosphere. On the most basic level, autism relates to difficulties in social, emotional, and communication skills (“What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?”). Jane appears to display difficulties in all of the aforementioned fields, and based on her blunt nature and

1 See Lucy Barrington’s article, “A Reporter’s Guide to the Autism Speaks Debacle,” published November 2013 in Psychology Today for more information about the charities run by neurotypical people and their controversial reputation in the autistic community.

struggle to connect with people, as well as her pursuit in special interests like art and reading (especially when considering her fascination with images), one can view her character as autistically coded.

Her bluntness is demonstrated when rejecting Rochester. Jane’s mental state at Rochester asking if she finds him attractive is described thusly: “I should, if I had deliberated, have replied to this question by something conventionally vague and polite; but the answer somehow slipped from my tongue before I was aware, ‘No, sir’” (Brontë 96). The inability to censor oneself is often attributed to autistic behavior, and in Jane’s interaction with Rochester here, the response given could be an inferred indicator of her potential neurodivergence. This bluntness is described as “Janian” later by Rochester when Jane responds to his inquiry about where she went when she left Thornfield with “I have been with my aunt, sir, who is dead” (Brontë 178). Rochester’s description of this reply indicates the common nature of Jane’s attitude as direct and without any filter. Her character displays autistic traits intrinsic to Jane’s personality. The behavior of such emotionally detached reactions to family loss, even if her aunt was needlessly cruel towards Jane, relates to the difficulties that many autistic people have coping with emotionally distressing events.

In spite of the more negative associations autism has in the inability to connect emotionally or socially, many autistic people thrive in creative pursuits. Rodas states, “For many autistic persons, the visual world simply feels more real, more concrete, more authentic, than the seemingly random social interactions of a babbling humanity” (13). For Jane, the visual world consistently draws her attention. Jane is introduced to readers while she flips through a book, paying attention to the images contained particularly: “each picture told a story; mysterious often to my underdeveloped understanding and imperfect feelings, yet profoundly interesting;” this narrative demonstrates her attraction to the visual world rather than to interaction with other people (8). The fascination with visuals and Jane’s artistic talent only grow as she ages. She shows her art to Rochester upon request, before describing her feelings towards her creations: “The subjects had, indeed, risen vividly on my mind. As I saw them with the spiritual eye, before I attempted to embody them, they were striking; but my hand would not second my fancy, and in each case it had wrought out a pale portrait of the thing I had conceived” (Brontë 92). This passage shows her dissatisfaction with her artistic pursuits. Yet, later in the same scene, Jane also states, “I was absorbed, sir: yes, and I was happy. To paint them, in short, was to enjoy one of the keenest pleasures I have ever known” (Brontë 93). While not necessarily perfect, art provides her with security and joy. Her interest in art develops her as a complex character with traits similar to some autistic savants.

Having established common traits of autism Jane displays, I return again to changeling folklore. Notably, Jane fits into both demographics most common in changeling reports; as Silver states, “most of the incidents recorded involved the victimization of either children or women--that is, those who were viewed as dependent or subordinate” (66). The idea of changelings being a way to victimize powerless groups supports the connection of neurodivergence and changelings as well. However, the groups of marginalized people did not cease at only gender, age, and mental state. The changeling story is described as a means that “reinforced and intensified subtle prejudices” of the Victorian era (Silver 73). The difficulty in separating the changeling tale from prejudice further solidifies the concept as related to any outsider perspective. From this, we can infer that changelings and other faery beings could also explain discrimination in Victorian England against race, class,

and, perhaps most significantly, queerness.

Jane and the Queerness of Faeries

In approaching Jane's character as queer, background in queer theory is required to create a solid foundantion for further expansion on how she fits into this ideology. One element of queerness and visibility of queer characters is sexual stereotypes, which consist of natural/deviant behavior, monogamy/promiscuity, and gender clarity/gender ambiguity (Ott 221-227). In many ways, both faery lore and Jane's characteristics fit into queer theory through these listed attributes. In order to further support Jane's queerness, a folkloric figure should also be defined: the Swan Maiden. The tale is detailed as, "Spied upon while bathing or dancing with her sisters, one of the maidens would find her swanskin plumage stolen. Unable to flee, she would be forced to accept the embraces of her captor" (Silver 283). Simply, the Swan Maiden figure of Victorian folk tales is defined as a fairy bride captured by a mortal and forced into marriage. Silver adds, "Yet, even in captivity, she kept her separateness and power" (283). Silver continues, describing these Swan Maidens by comparing them to the Amazons, asserting, "The traits that female faeries shared with Amazons were equally evident: both groups were nonmonogamous, nonmaternal, outdoor creatures who favored hunting, riding, and wandering where and when they would," ideas that support the fundamental concepts of queer theory (285). She subverts gender expectations, which applies the queer theoretical concept of gender ambiguity. Silver also states, "Swan Maiden tales, as a genre, suggested the possibility of the superiority of women, thus overturning the prevailing hierarchy of gender," which applies to Jane's overarching story as a parallel to folklore while supporting the argument for her queerness as she functions within the Swan Maiden role (285).

The Swan Maiden story serves to deconstruct gender roles in a similar way that the androgyny of faeries is utilized. This information lends evidence to Jane's relationship with gender, as her role in romantic relationships and in life more generally is often considered transgressive for the Victorian era. Jane plays a more masculine role in many situations. During the Victorian era, financial management by women was unheard of. Yet, in the novel, Jane negotiates her inheritance with St. John and blatantly tells him that her future does not include marriage (Brontë 280). Her place as inheritor of a large sum of money gives her masculine power over St. John, Diana, and Mary. Further, she also refutes the patriarchal expectation of marrying when St. John brings the topic up, showing Jane's position as the controlling and dominant person in the conversation. Her resolute stance on marriage gives her command over the conversation, with her statement, "I know what I feel, and how averse are my inclinations to the bare thought of marriage" (Brontë 280-281). She effectively shuts down the conversation with force before St. John can force the role of wife onto Jane.

Upon her first meeting with Rochester, Jane takes on a masculine role once again. She serves a rescuer role for Rochester when he falls from his horse, as she assists him in recovering, with Rochester fulfilling a damsel in distress role rather than a masculine heroic one (Brontë 83-85). Upon his fall, Jane immediately offers assistance, and she stubbornly insists upon staying at the scene to see that Rochester has recovered. Her internal thoughts reflect this obstinance, as she declares to herself, "I would not be driven quite away till I saw the event" (Brontë 83). His appearance has many supernatural attributes, with the image compared to Jane's memories of fairy stories told to her as a young girl. She reminisces, "I remembered Bessie's tales, wherein figured a North-of-England spirit, called a 'Gytrash'" (Brontë 82-83). While unconnected to Irish folklore, the 'Gytrash' nonetheless reflects the submersion in fairy lore Jane experienced as a child. Also notable in the first meeting are the similarities between Rochester's first appearance and the figure of the Dullahan, a fairy creature in Irish folklore more commonly known as the headless horseman. Fairy figures are used both in reference to Rochester and Jane throughout the novel, yet Rochester's association with faery lore is far more brutish. Jane still maintains a certain ethereality, but Rochester as a faery indicates a more manipulative air to his character. From his first appearance, Brontë leads readers into a more haunting image of faery lore rather than Jane's more independent and gracious behavior. Where Jane's faery traits subvert gender expectations, Rochester's faery characteristics enforce his masculine coarseness.

From the beginning of their relationship, the references to faeries are dominant in Jane's relationship with Rochester. The most common references often indicate Jane's overall appearance and personality. This relationship dynamic ties sexuality to her faery-like ways. Developing this idea of sexuality and faery queerness, considering the novel as a narrative about abuse and control over women is an approach to take in terms of Rochester's attitude towards Jane's independence, which connects to the way Swan Maidens are perceived. Silver argues, "By depicting fairy brides either as depraved and degraded, akin to female savages, or as idealized and etherealized beyond the realm of physical desire, folklorists brought female sexuality within the realm of Victorian comprehension," which establishes a need to tame women's sexuality both within Victorian consciousness and in the Swan Maiden tale's use as it relates to Jane Eyre (290). Throughout the novel, Jane is portrayed as a passionate individual in many areas of life, and her relationship with Rochester could be interpreted as a stifling of that fiery autonomy within herself. In "taming" Jane by placing her in the position of the Swan Maiden, Rochester is both taking ownership of her passion and trying to create a more docile wife, while also degrading her by viewing her as a sexual faery-like being.

Yet *Jane Eyre* is a Gothic novel, a genre known as a space for subverting the Victorian assumption that men can take ownership of women's sexuality. To support an argument for Jane's queerness, many scholars have approached the novel as a work of Gothic literature. The genre of the Gothic is ideal for pursuing queer themes compared to other forms of speculative fiction. In the Victorian era, sexuality was seen as a taboo topic, and as George E. Hagerty argues, "Gothic fiction offered the one semirespectable area of literary endeavor in which modes of sexual and social transgression were discursively addressed on a regular basis," a statement that points to sexual repression as a source of inspiration for writers of the Gothic (3). Jane Eyre certainly falls into this description of Gothic queerness, as the novel uses common indicators of queerness. An interesting connection to point out is Charlotte Brontë's own close relationships with

Yet Jane Eyre is a Gothic novel, a genre known as a space for subverting the Victorian Assumption that men can take ownership of women's sexuality.

women in her life, which have generated discussion of Jane as a bisexual or lesbian character. Both genre and narrative form relate to the queer themes of the novel. The narrative form focuses on recounting past events, with the entire story being written as a reflection of Jane's memories: "Memory offers the heroine the opportunity to confront her deepest fears and darkest desires," which contributes to the argument that the chronology of the story relates to Jane trying to convince herself of being satisfied

with Rochester (Haggerty 14). Rather than effectively persuading herself that she is happy with Rochester, writing about the past instead brings to the surface Jane's queer desires.

Jane's friendship with Helen Burns is a focus of reflection on her past, and their relationship strongly indicates some form of queer coding. However, Jane and Helen cannot pursue this relationship due to the Victorian expectations of heterosexuality. As Haggerty says of Gothic queerness, "Because same-sex love is impossible, everyone becomes a victim" (26). The death of Helen Burns fits into this idea, with the scene described by Brontë as, "She kissed me, and I her, and we both soon slumbered. [...] I was asleep, and Helen was--dead" (61). Helen Burns, one of Jane's very first romantic interests, dies in the same bed as Jane. Victimhood is most explicit in Helen's case, with her dying, but Jane's experience likely impacted her traumatically as well. Neither girl can pursue their homoerotic desires, and with that impossibility the only outcome is suffering.

Notably, Helen dies from tuberculosis (also known as consumption), a disease connected to vampirism and associated with blood. By approaching the subject of consumption as a disease that "eats away" at the person, faery lore once again becomes relevant. Silver describes of a type of fairy seen as a parasitic creature: "the omnipresence of the Ilhiannon-shee and her sister fairies-their sucking of vitality and life, whether metaphorical or literal--

Kaeanne Louks, copper, brass, plastic

suggests how widespread was the male Victorian fear of being devoured by the female" (182). Helen's association with consumption as a disease is also used as a motif referring to her as a queer faery seeking to devour males. Even the epitaph for Helen, "Resurgam," means "I shall rise again," a possible reference to supernatural forces such as vampires (Brontë 61). Faeries are often associated with death, with one example described as, "The terror of the banshee seems to lie in her zombielike qualities, in the fact that she looks like the dead reanimated rather than reborn" (Silver 174). Further, the Lianhan Shee are also referred to as "like a leech" in some folklore, strengthening the association between faeries and vampiric beings (Silver 180). The idea of vampiric faeries connects to the ideology surrounding tuberculosis during the Victorian era. This creates further evidence of faery lore indicating queerness, even outside of Jane's character.

Another trait relating to queerness that does not necessarily relate directly to Jane is the age difference between her and Rochester. As Haggerty points out, "The disowned and dishonored heroine [...] flees the aggressive attentions of an overly erotic father or father surrogate" (30). Rochester's age difference certainly portrays him as paternal rather than romantic. He speaks to her as a father to a child, asking, "'Did you expect a present, Miss Eyre? Are you fond of presents?" upon his first formal discussion with her (Brontë 89). The trigger for the questions he asks also stems from his daughter's demands that Jane receive a gift. His treatment of her reflects that of his own child, though Jane's responses align with her age. The idea of this Gothic trope is fulfilled when Jane flees from Thornfield and Rochester after finding out about Rochester's marriage to Bertha (Brontë 231-233). Her queerness is accented by this action of running away from Rochester, as she attempts to escape his control when she learns of his own transgressive abuse of power over Bertha. His former marriage subjectively reflects heterosexual relationships and the dangers held within them. Jane running away from Thornfield represents an escape from the patriarchal position Rochester places her in. Jane's position as an orphan further supports the idea of Rochester as a father figure, as mentions of her desperation for familial love consistently arise in the novel. Forced into a relationship with Rochester, Jane settles on his romantic intentions because he serves her as a paternal figure, and that is the closest to an erotic heterosexual relationship as she can truly achieve.

Conclusion

While many scholars have noticed the prevalence of Irish faery folklore in Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre*, rarely has the idea been explored as a way of developing Jane's mental state and sexuality. However, through my analysis of the novel, using evidence of faery lore, the titular character can be read as both queer and neurodivergent. Charlotte Brontë's connection to Ireland and its tales of fae strengthen the argument for using Irish lore to develop Jane's characteristics. By reading the Swan Maiden figure relating to fairy brides as subversive to patriarchal expectations, and the changeling folklore as references to autism before the disorder was officially recognized, key development of Jane's character connect to faeries on a deeper level than other scholarly claims that her and Rochester's relationship is based upon faery references.

Elise Visscher, copper

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Route 48

Sarah Behrens ***ENGL 343: Travel Writing***

I'd like to nominate Sarah's radio essay, "Route 48," from Travel Writing. The assignment was to produce a radio essay of no more than seven minutes featuring either a profile of a compelling person or an issue-driven story with at least two competing perspectives. Strong radio essays develop excellent complexity in the profile subject, establish a universal theme, balance interview clips with narration, and layer music and sound effects over the spoken word to create a "theatre of the mind" effect. Sarah's grandmother is an unforgettable character with her crackly voice and laughter. Sarah also weaves music and sound effects (like the wooden xylophone from her grandmother's childhood) seamlessly throughout the story to keep us entranced. The result is a story that warms our hearts by engaging the universal themes of music and family through old recordings and a voice that echoes in our imaginations long after the story is over. I suspect that you'll want to listen to this story more than once, and that you'll be just as delighted by it every time.

-Joshua Dolezal

To listen to "Route 48," please visit central.edu/route48

The text transcript of this radio essay is printed on the next pages.

Hallie Taets, copper

["In The Mood" playing in background]

Sarah: My grandma was part of a band her brother put together, and this is actually a recording of them performing. This is a song that is popular in big band or dance band scenes, and is called "In The Mood". So how do two siblings from rural southwest Iowa put together a dance band? Well, it all started when she was younger. When did you first start getting interested in music?

Grandma: Oh, probably 4 years old. Grandma played the piano. She liked to have me sing for her, and she gave me piano lessons when I was 5.

Sarah: But piano and singing weren't her only talents.

Grandma: When I was in the second grade, we had a music program every year. Well, I can't remember the song, [Xylophone noises] but my music teacher had a little wooden xylophone. She had me play the xylophone. And I could take it home and practice on it and everything. That was quite an honor.

Sarah: She then went on to tell me about a musical they did called Sonny of Sunnyside when she was in the third grade. It's a story about a little girl who lives in an orphanage. She got the star role as the little girl, and even shared the solo she sang. The solo was supposed to be to her mother who had died.

Grandma: [Singing] "Mother are you looking down from heavens window high? Can you hear your little girl oh can you hear me cry?" I don't remember the rest of it. [Chuckling] And they said there were people in the audience that were crying. [Chuckles] Because it was so bad I imagine! [Roaring laughter]

Sarah: So she obviously had some natural talent. Then she got introduced to band in the fifth grade.

Grandma: I wanted to be in band, and I looked through the catalog and I looked at the cheapest things. You know there were Mandolins and stuff like that. There was this tenor sax advertised in the paper. [Saxophone playing in background] And my dad didn't have that much money, so he went to our landlord and borrowed the 35 dollars to buy the saxophone.

Sarah: Her dad never asked to borrow for anything.

Grandma: I had to stick with it, you know, there was no question. He wouldn't even borrow for his own mother. So, I had to make good on it.

Sarah: Then her younger brother got to the age where he could participate in band. With the combined power of her and her mom, they taught him how to play the saxophone. He played the alto, and by the time they got to high school, they bought a new alto for her brother, and gave her the choice to fix hers or get a new one. She still has her original tenor, and high school would be the first time they were a part of a dance band.

Grandma: ["You Go To My Head" playing in background] We all played with Chrysinger, he had this little dance band. Uh grandma played piano. Fred Chrysinger he played sax, too. And then BJ and I were both in there. We were all high school kids. Playing for dances. And Fred looked out for us, you know, people would offer us alcohol to us, and he wouldn't allow anybody to buy anything for us.

Sarah: Not letting you kids get too crazy. And then the third sibling got involved. My grandma was 14 years old when her sister was born. She told a story of how her little sister had a toy saxophone and sat next to her mom on the piano bench and would sing into it during their practices. And Route 48 was born. ["Five Foot Two" fades in]

Grandma: Uncle Bill started Route 48 and managed it and did all the bookings. He took care of the business end of it, and the scheduling and everything. We played pretty well for a small town band. That came about because Highway 48 runs from Elliot up to Griswold, and we all, most of us, lived along 48 within a couple miles, so that was a good name for it.

Sarah: She couldn't remember when, but she thought the group was created in the 80's. The CD that I have was recorded in 2001. So there's a pretty good chance that there were plenty of memories made.

Grandma: It was so much fun. I just loved being with them and playing with them. It didn't matter to me, you know, I enjoyed going to rehearsals. [Laughter] Because they were ornery bunch. The rehearsals were more fun than the jobs were. But it always helped if you had an audience that appreciated your efforts. I always enjoyed playing with Route 48 and with Chrysinger too. It was a good, respectable job.

Sarah: I couldn't imagine life without music in it, and neither could she.

Grandma: No I can't, because I've always had the radio and stuff. ["Stardust" fades in] Well I didn't have a record player so I didn't buy a lot of records or anything, but I always listened to the radio and I knew all the popular songs and stuff. Yea it was my favorite hobby. And grandma was always there to accompany me, so I didn't have to play by myself. [Laughter] That really encouraged us. She was a good piano player.

Sarah: She always enjoyed playing with Bj, her brother, and their mom in a small group. He always got the melody, since he played the alto, so she was required to play the harmony. Even in Route 48 she got the harmony. She revealed something I never knew before. I never knew she wanted to go to college. She always just talked about how Uncle Bill, or BJ, went to school to become a doctor and worked all the time.

Grandma: If I had had the money, when I graduated I would have gone to Drake and studied music. But I didn't feel like I had the drive or the ability to be, I would have been more interested in doing arranging. And I would have enjoyed studying that. But I went to work as a secretary instead.
["In The Mood" fades in]

Sarah: I am proud to have the family history in music that we have. It made holiday gatherings like Thanksgiving that much more interesting. Not everyone can say they had a family band jam session with four generations, but my grandma can.

Art Credits

Megan Rohr, 16” x 40”, acrylic **front and back cover**

Ally Madsen, 8” diameter, acrylic **6**

Jaden Culbertson, 4’ x 4’ mixed media **13**

Sarahi Ledesma, glass **17**

Hallie Taets, 4’ x 4’ mixed media **26**

Rodney Williams, 10” x 18” mixed media **30**

Hannah Walsh, 9” x 12”, marker **35**

Emma Clodfelter, 9” x 9” x 7”, paper **39**

Marina Rosalez, 9” by 12”, marker **41**

Sabrina Tallman, glass **43**

Que Baker-McCaulay, 22” x 30”, marker **47**

Grace Teig, repurposed aluminum **49**

Marina Rosalez, 18” x 24”, graphite **54**

Kaeanne Louks, copper, brass, plastic **59**

Elise Visscher, copper **60**

Hallie Taets, copper **62**

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