

# THE MONTAG

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Editor's Note:

The papers contributed to this year's Montag often generated interesting discussions. One in particular struck me: Another editor and I had spiraled off in to a tangent about political revolution vs. political reform (the need for which is implied in some of this year's papers). In our talk, they said to me that they had often feared a revolution. They explained they could cite evidence that in revolution it is often we as intellectuals who are put on the chopping block.

I couldn't purge the idea from my mind. So I asked myself: why? Why is it that in cases of populist uprising, scholars are often targeted as the perpetrators of the oppression being cast down? I ultimately decided that it must certainly be that scholars in those times and places failed to create works which fell in line with the people's ethos. We decided then that this year's Montag should be counter to that narrative. It is our responsibility as the campus journal to publish the mode of the student body's opinion. The overwhelming majority of submissions were challenging to hegemonic truths. So that challenge became the theme of the volume. By publishing this journal, we hope to move the outward face of our University toward reflecting the political ideologies of its people.

-Griffin Peralta

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UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA

Queequeg and Ishmael: How Race and Homoeroticism Mediate Each Other in *Moby-Dick*; or, the Whale  
Jazmin Boulton

The most prominent relationship in Herman Melville's 1851 novel *Moby-Dick*; or, the Whale gave the novel its namesake and catapulted it to fame: the relationship between the vengeance-seeking Captain Ahab and the whale that took his leg, Moby-Dick. This relationship is the foreground of the novel, and it is what drives much of the main plot. However, there is another relationship, one that is highlighted not nearly as often, that is equally fascinating, if not more so. This relationship is the one between the white American narrator, Ishmael, and the "savage" Pacific Islander, Queequeg. Even a relatively progressive reader would be surprised by the sheer number of homoerotic undertones (or rather, overtones) in *Moby-Dick*; or, the Whale, especially when the homoeroticism exists largely between a white man and a Pacific Islander man in the mid-1800s. This on its own is interesting and worthy of analysis. Yet what truly makes Ishmael and Queequeg's relationship interesting is how Ishmael seems to justify it throughout the novel: Queequeg's race. The racial superiority that Ishmael feels towards Queequeg is in turn mediated by the homoerotic relationship between the two men. With Ishmael and Queequeg's relationship, Herman Melville cleverly muddles both sexuality theories from Eve Sedgwick and racial theories of Zora Neal Hurston (although the theorists are from a time after him). Melville effectively complicates Sedgwick's homosocial/triangulation theories and Hurston's racial stereotype theory by making racial difference a mediator for homoeroticism and homoeroticism a mediator for racism/discrimination, thus forcing the reader to view Ishmael and Queequeg's relationship from an intersectional lens that combines race and sexuality.

The most crucial theory to understand and consider when analyzing Ishmael and Queequeg's relationship through this lens is Sedgwick's theory of homosociality. Sedgwick discusses this theory in her book *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. The term "homosocial" is "applied to such activities as 'male bonding'... Which may, in our society, be characterized by intense homophobia, fear, and hatred of sexuality" (*Between Men* 2466). Sedgwick's use of "desire" is not inherently sexual; for her, the term means "the affective or social force, the glue... that shapes an important relationship"

(Between Men 2467). Thus, combining the two terms creates the concept that men experience a want for male bonding in order to maintain and strengthen their relationship with other men, but this want is often accompanied by extremely strong negative feelings about homophobia and sexuality. According to Sedgwick, homosociality and homoeroticism exist on the same continuum, much like Adrienne Rich's lesbian continuum for women, but unlike the lesbian continuum, the continuum "for men, in our society, is radically disrupted" (Between Men 2467). The cause of the disruption is an intense fear of homosexuality and fear of being seen as homosexual. The entire continuum is labeled "male homosocial desire" (Between Men 2467).

From this idea of homosociality comes another important theory needed to discuss Ishmael and Queequeg's relationship through this specific lens: Sedgwick's triangulation theory. The triangulation theory is based off of, unsurprisingly, the idea of the "love triangle." Essentially, it is "homosocial desire... between men whose bonding is forged through their rivalry over a woman who mediates their relationship and deflects any taint of eroticism" ("Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick" 2465). The need for a woman mediator arises due to intimacy between men. As soon as intimacy between men comes into being, it must immediately be disavowed for fear of the men being labeled "gay." In this type of scenario, women are used as mediators who allow men to have homosocial relationships without eroticism. The two men are able to have a relationship through their rivalry over a woman. Interestingly enough, as Sedgwick, drawing on Rene Girard, points out, "the bond that links the rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved" ("Gender Asymmetry and Erotic Triangles" 21).

Sedgwick's sexuality theories (and social norms of American society both in Melville's time and, arguably, now) demand that a woman be present to mediate the relationship between Ishmael and Queequeg. Yet there is no female object of desire that the two men are competing for. Actually, there are barely any women in *Moby-Dick*; or, the *Whale* at all. It must be noted that whether or not Ishmael and Queequeg's relationship is actually homoerotic is a rather moot point in this situation, as even if they were "just friends" (which is highly unlikely), they would still need a woman to mediate that relationship. In fact, if Ishmael and Queequeg's relationship were homosocial, rather than homoerotic, the need for a female mediator would be even greater. As stated earlier, Sedgwick labels the entire male relationship continuum as "male homosocial desire" (Between Men 2467). This means that as long as there is some sort of desire for "male bonding"

between Ishmael and Queequeg, then they are on the continuum. One might be led to believe that the lack of a woman mediator in Ishmael and Queequeg's relationship means that they are both comfortable in their sexualities and with this relationship, and while that is a lovely thought, deeper analysis strongly suggests that this is not the case. Keeping this in mind, it becomes apparent that the rivalry itself is what allows the relationship between the two men to exist, and it does not necessarily have to be over a woman. Since Ishmael is the narrator, Queequeg's perspective on the matter is quite ambiguous. However, Ishmael, it seems, simply replaces the hypothetical female lover with something much bigger: race, or rather, racial difference.

It is a bit misleading, though, to say that Ishmael "simply" replaces the woman with racial difference, as his doing so adds a layer of complexity to the relationship that would not be there if the mediator were an individual woman rather than an entire concept. Racial difference functions as a mediator differently than a woman would because racial difference creates an inherent (or at least, inherent in colonial mid-1800s American society) rivalry between a white man and a Pacific Islander man. A woman mediator, on the other hand, only creates a strong rivalry when the two men are embroiled in a passionate dispute over her. Racial difference may not always be as intense a mediator, but it is certainly more constant, as shown by Ishmael's thoughts towards Queequeg throughout *Moby-Dick*; or, the Whale.

Ishmael's, and by proxy the reader's, introduction to the "savage" Queequeg is dominated by feelings of fear and suspicion. A large proportion of the third chapter, "The Spouter-Inn," is devoted to Ishmael's anxiety and agitation over who he must share a bed with, as he has never met Queequeg. The chapter has some mild homophobia as well, with Ishmael saying, "No man prefers to sleep two in a bed... The more I pondered over this harpooner, the more I abominated the thought of sleeping with him" (Melville 17-18). Ishmael even goes so far as to attempt to sleep on a bench that night, as apparently, he would rather spend a miserable night sleeping on a wooden plank than share a bed with another man.

However, by the end of the chapter, Ishmael has met and warmed up to his new bedmate, describing Queequeg's actions as "really kind and charitable" (Melville 26). The end of "The Spouter-Inn" marks the beginning of Ishmael's mental transformation. There are still some touches of potential homophobia later in the novel, but they are largely tempered by Ishmael's condescension towards Queequeg due to the Pacific Islander's "savagery." Ishmael becomes extremely comfortable with Queequeg in a way that embodies "homosociality" fairly well—except that there is a lack of intense fear of being seen as homosexual. The fourth chapter, "The Counterpane," opens with Ishmael waking up and finding "Queequeg's arm thrown over [him] in the most loving and affectionate manner" (Melville 28). Ishmael goes on to say that the feeling is strange, but it is "comical," if anything, to have "Queequeg's pagan arm" around him (Melville 29). Ishmael's calling Queequeg's arm "pagan" is important, as it reminds the reader that Queequeg is "other." Queequeg's "otherness" is precisely what allows the situation to be merely strange and comical, and not at all something that incites homophobia or discomfort in Ishmael.

Another excellent example of homosociality being mediated by racial difference in Ishmael's relationship with Queequeg occurs in the tenth chapter of the novel, "A Bosom Friend." After the two men smoke tobacco together, Queequeg proclaims that they are married, meaning that "he would gladly die for [Ishmael]" (Melville 57). This proclamation, along with the clearly homoerotic gestures it is accompanied by (the men's foreheads pressed together and Queequeg's arm around Ishmael's waist), prompts Ishmael to explain the sudden lapse in strict heterosexuality by saying, "In a countryman, this sudden flame of friendship would have seemed far too premature, a thing to be distrusted; but in this simple savage those old rules would not apply" (Melville 57). Ishmael does not completely disavow the intimacy, as Sedgwick's theory would dictate, but he does seek to justify it with the fact that Queequeg is Pacific Islander and therefore a "simple savage". If Ishmael engaged in this type of relationship with another white American man, the relationship would be tarnished, if not altogether destroyed, by the stigma of homosexuality that was rampant in their society. However, since Queequeg is from an entirely different culture- one that does not stigmatize homosexuality, or homosociality in general (at least as far as Ishmael can tell)- the societal norms that Ishmael is accustomed to are rendered nearly irrelevant. That said, the fact that Queequeg is "other" still gives Ishmael a sense of superiority. Ishmael's affection towards Queequeg is of the condescending variety; it is



not entirely dissimilar to the way some people might view their pet dogs.

In fact, virtually every homoerotic happening between Ishmael and Queequeg is mediated by Ishmael's oddly affectionate condescension towards Queequeg due to his race. Sometimes this is done rather subtly, such as in the eleventh chapter, "Nightgown." The chapter centers upon Ishmael and Queequeg in bed together. Ishmael slips race into the very first sentence, saying "Queequeg now and then affectionately [threw] his brown tattooed legs over mine" (Melville 59). It is imperative that Ishmael mentions Queequeg's "brown tattooed legs" in the beginning of the chapter because, in his mind, it allows him to speak about their obviously homosocial and arguably homoerotic actions without fear of judgment. After all, Queequeg is only a "simple savage," and since his race causes him to be uncivilized, it is entirely acceptable for the two men to be emotionally intimate in bed together.

This is all incredibly fascinating as is, but bringing Zora Neale Hurston into the situation makes the relationship all the more interesting- and complicated. As an African-American woman writer, Hurston knew all about power struggles, especially racial ones. Her concept of "The American Museum of Unnatural History," from her essay, "What White Publishers Won't Print" elaborates on the idea of racial stereotypes. While Pacific Islanders are not mentioned in the essay, clear parallels can be drawn between Queequeg and the museum's Native American. Hurston says, "The American Indian [exhibit] is a contraption of copper wires in an eternal war bonnet, with no equipment for laughter, expressionless face... His only activity is treachery leading to massacres" (Hurston 1024).

Ishmael does not explicitly say that he thinks Queequeg is a warmonger, but makes it obvious that he believes the Pacific Islander is full of murderous intentions, at least when they first meet. In the third chapter of *Moby-Dick*; or, the Whale, when Ishmael first encounters Queequeg and realizes the man is a Pacific Islander, he says, "It was now... at that tomahawk!" (Melville 24). Tomahawks clearly read "Native American," and Ishmael's calling attention to Queequeg's tomahawk supports the parallel between Ishmael's view of Queequeg and Hurston's American Indian. Further, Ishmael attributes his fear to ignorance, which affirms Hurston's statement that "Man, like all the other animals fears, and is repelled by that which he does not understand, and mere difference is apt to connote something malign" (Melville 24, Hurston 1023). Ishmael has likely never met a Pacific Islander before, let alone gotten to know one, and thus his ignorance of Pacific Islanders creates an acute sense of fear within him. His

mind automatically lumps together all “brown savages,” meaning that his ignorance of Pacific Islanders forces him to interpret Queequeg through signifiers of Native Americans (such as the tomahawk).

Funnily enough, Hurston’s essay “What White Publishers Don’t Print” was published nearly 100 years exactly after *Moby-Dick*; or, the Whale. Yet Ishmael, in his own slightly condescending way, is more accepting and understanding of Queequeg than 1950s publishers were of non-white writers. Ishmael’s attempts to overcome his othering of Queequeg, though perhaps unsatisfactory to the modern reader, begin to become evident by the end of “The Spouter-Inn,” when Ishmael says, “Better sleep with a sober cannibal than a drunken Christian” (Melville 26). The reason Ishmael continues to bridge the racial difference between himself and Queequeg is obvious: the two men are in a relationship. Thus, similarly to how racial difference mediates homoeroticism in Ishmael and Queequeg’s relationship, homoeroticism mediates racial difference and racism.

As stated earlier, the end of “The Spouter-Inn” signals the beginning of Ishmael’s ideological metamorphosis. The chapter closes with Ishmael saying, “I turned in, and never slept better in my life” (Melville 27). Ishmael has clearly started to feel more comfortable with Queequeg. Any semblance of fear or suspicion he felt earlier in the chapter has been vanquished.

The next chapter, “The Counterpane” as discussed earlier, is when male homosocial desire truly begins to enter Ishmael and Queequeg’s relationship. Just a few chapters later, in “A Bosom Friend,” the homoeroticism is undeniable. The chapter opens with Ishmael quietly observing Queequeg counting the pages of a book, remarking upon the Pacific Islander’s physical appearance. Ishmael says, “Savage though he was, and hideously marred about the face - at least to my taste - his countenance yet had a something in it which was by no means disagreeable” (Melville 55). This comment is interesting in that the more homoerotic it becomes, the less blatantly racist becomes. Thus, it shows Ishmael moderating his own racial prejudices by admitting that he finds Queequeg handsome. This metamorphosis occurs mid-comment, with “at least to my taste”; here, Ishmael has said something racist and is attempting to correct himself by pointing out that the idea that Queequeg is “savage” and “hideously marred” comes from his own biased perspective.

Of course, Ishmael being the sole narrator of *Moby-Dick*; or, the Whale, and that Queequeg never explicitly telling Ishmael about his homoerotic feelings, the reader is left to their own devices as to whether or not Ishmael’s feelings for Queequeg are returned.

Zora Neale Hurston argues that white Americans believe “people who do not look like them cannot possibly feel as they do,” and that contributes to white publishers not printing romance stories about people of color (Hurston 1025). Yet, if Ishmael is to be trusted, Queequeg clearly has feelings. How, then, does one resolve the issue that Hurston’s argument brings up? The most appropriate answer seems to be the white American-ness of Herman Melville, the author of the novel, and Ishmael, the narrator. In *Moby-Dick*; or, the Whale, the perspective of a person of color is being assumed by a white man. Because it is not an actual person of color writing about having feelings, there is a sort of layer of safety between the “savage’s” feelings and the reader. One could argue that there are actually two layers, one being Ishmael as the narrator and the other being Melville as the author, since both men are white Americans. Either way, Melville has successfully configured an elaborate theoretical framework for Ishmael to navigate, wherein two different threats reconcile each other: racial difference and male homosocial desire.

Melville modifies Sedgwick’s original theories about homosociality and triangulation so that Ishmael and Queequeg’s relationship is not mediated by their love for the same woman, but rather by the fact that they are of different races. There is no doubt that Ishmael truly cares about Queequeg, but it is undeniable that Ishmael still feels more than a tinge of racial superiority over the Pacific Islander. This racial superiority, at least in Ishmael’s mind, is what makes the relationship between the two men acceptable. It is not the mere lack of a female love interest that complicates Sedgwick’s theory; it is the replacement altogether of her by racial difference. The men are not rivals in a quest for a woman’s love, but due to their race. The end goal is the same, however: to be superior to the man one is in a homosocial relationship with. The relationship, as illustrated by Ishmael, shows just how ambiguous the division between rivalry and bond can be. Ishmael both maintains and bridges racial difference by using it as the “woman” in Sedgwick’s triangle of homosociality. This strongly affirms Sedgwick’s claim that “the bond between rivals in an erotic triangle [are] even stronger, more heavily determinant of actions and choices, than anything in the bond between either of the lovers and the beloved” (“Gender Asymmetry and Erotic Triangles” p.21). Thus, although a sense of racial superiority from Ishmael permeates the relationship between him and Queequeg, the relationship itself is much stronger than the racial superiority.

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On Shirking Subjugation:  
The Role and Agency of Women in *The Road*  
Michael Cavanaugh

It is easy and perhaps even safe to read Cormac McCarthy's magnum opus, *The Road*, as a novel which expands upon and explores the relationship between father and son in a post-apocalyptic world. However, to read *The Road* as such is tantamount to only reading the synopsis on the back of the jacket, and allows for the true meaning of the work to slip by unnoticed. In fact, *The Road* is about the role of women in the modern day as reflected through a post-apocalyptic lens which shows not only the attempts of men to subjugate them, but also the ways in which women deny that subjugation and show agency in their own roles in society. Therefore, it is crucial that *The Road* be analyzed using feminist theory. *The Road* shows the power which women can exert over themselves and their environment when they wield their agency effectively, and it also reveals the violence which can be visited upon them when the opposition to that agency is overwhelming.

It is important first that several terms be explained in order to better understand the lens through which *The Road* will be analyzed. The first and most important term is that which has already been mentioned: feminist theory, in particular its extension into literary criticism. Feminist theory in this context is "[the deconstruction of] the opposition man/woman and the oppositions associated with it in the history of Western culture, it is a version of poststructuralism," (Culler, 2011, 140). Essentially, feminist theory seeks to deconstruct the divide between men and women, particularly in literature and works of art, as is the case here. The second term is hegemony, as defined by Culler: "An arrangement of domination accepted by those who are dominated. Ruling groups dominate not by pure force, but through a structure of consent, and culture is a part of this structure that legitimizes current social arrangements," (Culler, 2011, 51). It is important to note here that a system of hegemony is inherently unsustainable, that those who are oppressed by the system will eventually be moved to destroy or otherwise irreparably alter that system so as to strive forward towards a state of non-oppression. A third and final term is objectification, defined as "when a person esp. a woman is reduced in standing from a human being to that of a mere object,"

(Szymanski et al, 2011, 7-8). The act of objectification is especially critical when it takes the form of sexual objectification. These three key terms will be used to dissect the three most prominent female presences in the novel: the female slaves, the boy's mother, and the mother at the end of the novel.

The first instance of a woman being physically present in the events of the novel comes a third of the way through the book when a passing caravan's cargo includes a dozen women who have been taken as slaves; this scene shows, better than any other scene in the novel, what happens to women when they are robbed of their agency, either by their own fear or through the presence of an overwhelming force to oppose them. "After that the women, perhaps a dozen in number, some of them pregnant, and lastly a supplementary consort of catamites illclothed against the cold and fitted with dogcollars and yoked each to each," (McCarthy, 2006, 92). The women are objectified twice in the passage, first by the text acknowledging that they have been fitted with dog collars, and second by the presence of pregnant women, implying that the women are being raped by the older men of the group. It is the presence of the catamites – young boys kept for homosexual rape – that firmly cements the women's position as subhuman, that they are kept collared to these boys asserts that they are only slightly better for being of a more acceptable gender to their rapists. It is possible to read this scene as the women marching in front of the boys, and that the boys are only collared to one another, however, the lack of punctuation makes either reading viable. The implication of what happens to the pregnant women's children once they're born is realized further down the road. "What the boy had seen was a charred human infant headless and gutted and blackening on the spit," (McCarthy, 2006, 198). This shows the reaction that the caravan would likely have when the women gave birth, that of using the infant for food. This creates a metaphor of men literally devouring what a woman creates to feed oneself, implying a relationship in which women create what could be a future for a plausibly doomed species, and men destroy that future in order to sustain their own lives. This is the price of the removal of female agency: the cannibalization of the future.

The second demonstration of female agency in the book comes in longest dream sequence, during which the man's wife abandons them to kill herself; this display of her agency is incredibly important to the idea of female agency within *The Road* because it reveals that there is another option besides being forced into sexual enslavement: the ending of one's own life. This contributes to the hegemony of a society which constantly objectifies women by creating no meaningful obstacle for its

continued existence. It is the oppressor who is made more powerful by suicide, and not the oppressed. “They will catch us and they will kill us. They will rape me. They’ll rape him. they’ll rape us and kill us and you won’t face it,” (McCarthy, 2006, 56). This dialogue, said by the woman, is important for two reasons. First it reveals that she is hyper-aware of what the men of the world could do to her and her child, and has become fixated on it. Second, it reveals that although not a part of the group who is directly oppressing women, the man is complicit in their actions by not being willing to accept the tremendous danger to his wife and child. This shows a parallel to how oppression actually works: those who are neither oppressed nor directly doing the oppressing are often unable or unwilling to see the reality of the situation, and at times those being oppressed are unable to see anything else. The scene continues, the woman leaving to kill herself: “She would do it with a flake of obsidian...the edge an atom thick. And she was right. There was no argument. The hundred nights they’d sat up debating the pros and cons of self-destruction with the earnestness of philosophers chained to a madhouse wall,” (McCarthy, 2006, 58). Here it can be seen that the man is brought around to the futility of his continued fight, convinced by – or at least accepting of – his wife’s choice to kill herself. Despite her ability to choose, she could see nothing but her imagined destruction, and because of it, walked willingly into a quicker end. This reveals the danger of using agency not as a means to fight against oppression but as a reaction to it. The woman, so fearful, opts only to remove herself from the path of the oppressor, helping them by ensuring that she is neither in the way of, or a part of, their system. She silences herself, out of a reasonable fear, for the thought that it is her only option. However, the woman at the end of the road reveals that there is a third option.

The third appearance of a female character comes at the very end of the boy’s journey in the form of a woman who bookends the earlier scene with the man’s wife, showing the most agency of any female character, and an incredible resilience and defiance of established systems simply by continuing to exist outside of the hegemony. “When she saw him she put her arms around him and held him. Oh, she said, I am so glad to see you. She would talk to him sometimes about God.” (McCarthy, 2006, 286). This is the woman’s greatest act of defiance against the system of oppression: existing in a place that would seek to make her either dead or enslaved, and existing as a maternal figure to not only one child, but two others as well. She uses her agency in direct defiance of hegemony by issuing to it a quiet revolt in which her very being is revolutionary. A second and subtler act

of defiance is in her speaking to the boy about God. Throughout the novel it should be noted that the man questions the existence of a higher power; in fact there are dozens of references to an expired, Godless world, in which the boy is the last vestige of any sort of Godly presence: "If he is not the word of God God never spoke," (McCarthy, 2006, 5). The hegemony of man's dominance is constantly reinforced by the man's insistence that God is either dead or never existed at all, and that the moral-compass of Christendom is therefore also null. However, the woman refutes this on its face, suggesting that not only is God real, but that the boy should speak to him. She reinforces the idea that morality and goodness still exist in the world, and in the boy: "She said that the breath of God was his breath yet though it pass from man to man through all of time," (McCarthy, 2006, 286). The woman insists that – even though the boy cannot bring himself to talk to God, and cannot bring himself to truly accept the morality of the world – such a thing is still present. She insists that the goodness of the world is still present in all people, if only they might be brave enough to look within themselves and find it there. This is a truly brave declaration by the woman, as throughout the novel it is clear that everyone from the boy's father, to the men in the caravan are all reinforcing the hegemony by allowing and insisting on a world in which there is no God and no morality to speak of – excusing their actions. The woman reveals her true power by denying this entirely. She serves as a startling denial of the new society and a beacon to guide the boy in a way that the men of his life were never capable of.

The Road is exemplary of the power which women are capable of exerting over their world and themselves, however it is also exemplary of the violence which can be done to them and by them when they give their power over to fear of violence. The question then becomes one of application, of asking how these women's uses of agency reflect the very real ways in which women wield their autonomy every day. One important factor is that all of the women in *The Road* are hyperaware of the violence which can be done to them at any time. The threat of violence is still ever-present, mostly from a system which seeks to divide, disenfranchise, and otherwise disrupt the agency of women. The novel illustrates the ways in which that system can be either perpetuated or disrupted, because above all *The Road* is aware that the world will not simply hurt women, it will exploit them and kill them if it can. *The Road* also allows itself to be read using the lens of race theory, as well as feminist theory, and were this paper not limited to six pages it would be race which it explored next.



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## Adapting and Adopting Foreign Customs Alexandra Cushman

The success of any civilization or culture depends on a number of things; the type of laws implemented, the economic system, quality education, etc. When observing past cultures however, the length of their existence is often the only thing taken into consideration. In some ways this does describe their success, but factors like the ones listed above must also be taken into account. Throughout the course of this class, many successful and unsuccessful cultures have been presented and analyzed. When comparing those from the ancient world with those of the medieval world, there are similarities between them that contributed to their success. The most important of these similarities that led to cultural success would be the ability to adapt traditions as well as rules and pieces of religion from other civilizations, and the most prominent evidence of this can be seen within Herodotus: *On the Customs of Persians*, *The Law of the Salian Franks*, and *The Life of Charlemagne*.

The first piece, *On the Customs of Persians*, was written by Herodotus, who analyzed the Persian culture and their successes. Because the “Persian nation is made up of many tribes” they were able to “readily adopt foreign customs” (Herodotus). This seems to be an advantage in many ways. They adapted other religions as well as traditions to help grow and cultivate. With great diversity comes great power. Their ability to harvest such a diverse yet unified culture allowed them to be successful. One of the most important aspects of a “successful” civilization is one that can create strength out of contrast, and this is just what the Persians did. Herodotus described them as “There is no nation which so readily adopts foreign customs as the Persians” (Herodotus). . Not only were the Persians able to accept and adapt to these customs, they did so eagerly and did their best to implement it into all aspects of their lives. They adopted foreign dinner talk, Greek tradition, and Egyptian clothing. This adaptation opened them to things that many would never learn about otherwise. The ability to open to many things and not be stuck in one way of thinking is a great advantage for cultures. It allows room for growth and this is exactly what the flexibility of the Persians earned them. Their culture was full of differences to begin with, due to the combination of many tribes, but also due to their acceptance of

others. Though not as long-lived as other cultures, the Persians were still an extremely prosperous culture due to their flexibility and adaptation to foreign custom and even if they are deemed of “not having their own culture,” this may be what had made them so open and different from other civilizations.

The next piece is one from the medieval world, *The Law of the Salian Franks*. Though this article doesn't explicitly reference cultural adaptation, when reading the laws closely enough, it can be concluded that some parts of Roman culture are intertwined. For instance, though the Romans were a very religious people, many of their laws dealt with paying money as punishment, which was also important to the Romans. Law 8:1 says, “If three men car off with a free born girl, they shall be compelled to pay 30 shillings” (*Salian Franks* 8:1). This type of punishment was somewhat new. In the past, law was based upon religious judgment. Either God would deem the perpetrator sinful and he would suffer turbulence in his life, or he would face his sins in the afterlife. Now though, the Franks decided to implement the type of punishment being used by Romans, as well as other cultures. Punishments based off of religion no longer dictated law. Most of the laws dealt with payment or inheritance, like law 59:1 “If any man die and leave no sons, if the father and mother survive, they shall inherit” (*Salian Franks* 59:1). Even great leaders like Charlemagne knew the advantages of adapting to foreign custom every so often. As described in, *The Life of Charlemagne*, “Charlemagne despised all foreign traditions, yet “[He allowed himself to be robed] twice in Rome, when he donned the Roman tunic, chlamys, and shoes; the first time at the request of Pope Hadrian, the second to gratify Leo, Hadrian's successor” (*Charlemagne* 23). Though he hated the idea of donning another culture's clothing, he knew that this would allow him to be respected by the Roman community. With acceptance and the ability to adapt to other cultures, their respect comes with it. Many great leaders would do this to please a nation they wanted to work with. If the people's approval could be won over, it was often much easier to come to agreements on trades as well as other foreign engagements. Inflexibility, rigidity, and the inability to accept other customs shows the true reflection of a culture, and by agreeing to do these things for other communities, Charlemagne won over many people that he wouldn't have if he had not done so. Acceptance is a key characteristic to have and it spoke to who he was a ruler as well an ally. The ability to adapt and adopt foreign customs was extremely beneficial for the Franks and often distinguishes the difference between a culture that is successful due to intimidation and one that is successful due to actual prosperity and care for its people.

When comparing these adaptive cultures with ones like the Catholic church, who do not accept foreign affairs, their growth and success is easily seen. Pope Boniface VIII who issued the *Unam Sanctam* explained the issues he felt foreign customs imposed. After being challenged by rulers of foreign countries, he claims “one sword ought to be subordinated to the other and temporal authority, subjected to spiritual power” (*Unam Sanctam*). This caused even greater conflict among the countries that opposed him. Bloodshed broke out and many of the people following Boniface did not know who to believe in or turn to. This was not seen among the cultures that adopted foreign customs. They openly welcomed change because in the future, it would allow them to be more prosperous and create greater connections with outside trading places. If any of the leaders from the civilizations analyzed above were to say “we declare, we proclaim, we define that it is absolutely necessary for salvation that every human creature be subject to the Roman Pontiff” as Boniface did, they would not have been as long lived or successful (*Unam Sanctam*). The ability to adapt to outside affairs makes for a more flexible and fruitful culture. If Pope Boniface had realized this, his claim to the church as well as the numerous amount of people who followed him may have been greater and more lengthy. His downfall was that he was too rigid and inflexible in his thinking. If he had been like the Persians who believed that other customs could also be great or even those outside of the church, he would have been a better leader. His failure to do so is a perfect example of a culture that did not succeed due to their inability to accept foreign customs.

Often times, the success of a culture is determined by the countries they have overcome, people they have converted, or the years a certain leader is in power, but there is more to it than that. When looking at cultures over the ancient and medieval periods, what makes the culture successful is clear; their ability to adapt to customs that are not their own. It is often hard for people, let alone whole civilizations to say that another group of people is better than them. When this dignity can be dropped and the fact can be accepted that someone is better at something, new levels of success can be reached. In this case, the Persians and Franks both saw how much more they could do and be if they were to learn from others. They could learn of other history and mistakes, as well as accept a new group of people and reduce conflict. It is also easy to see when a group fails to do this, like Pope Boniface. Unfortunately, his reaction to foreign customs led to bloodshed and warfare. The ability to have an open mind is a great thing to have because it can reduce so many unneeded conflicts as well as create wonderful things. Sadly, even today this is a problem. Great, well-established

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countries can't even accept foreign affairs. If they did though, they could be even greater than they were. It is hard for a whole civilization to take a step back and realize that they are doing something wrong, but when they do, the change is obvious. Being able to analyze several cultures over the course of this class allows this change to be seen and when comparing them to other, inflexible cultures, the differences in their success is huge. Being able to adapt and adopt is one of the biggest reasons these cultures succeeded.

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## Comedy in Hollywood: A Tool of Oppression Emmanuela Gore

Diversity in Hollywood is dead. In this day and age the American public is a dynamic pool of multicultural individuals with unique histories, personas, and world views; yet our entertainment industry does not portray this reality. The positive inclusion of minorities in daytime television and on the big screen has been and continues to be scarce. A majority of people of color are seen in roles that are culturally detrimental and in no way reflect their capacity for humanity. The use of characters of color as tropes is regressive for those misrepresented cultures as a whole. These roles in movies, television sitcoms, and commercials largely reinforce conventionally racist ideologies that serve an unseen purpose in modern capitalist society. Comedy is the dominant subcategory in film and television in which this disparity between societal realities and racist delusions come to head; it is an important component in understanding exactly what institutions brought an end to dynamic non-white characters in films, and why they must be revived.

Multidimensionality is often lost upon society when discussing people of color. Racial and cultural identities are continuously formed unequally and with a bias that favors white homosexual men, or at the very least places them in a position of privilege. This unbalanced categorization determines the roles these individuals are assigned within the hierarchy of a capitalist society. The most effective way of solidifying these assigned societal roles is through the perpetuation of stereotypes, policies, and ideologies that avert the growth of these populations. The historical institutionalization of anti-blackness must be explored in order to discuss the purpose of these roles assigned to people of color. Blackface was not the beginning of anti-blackness; it was the dawn of an era in which racially driven comedy was strategically utilized to shape the perception of blackness. Columbia graduate and social historian Eric Lott explored the ways in which the use of blackface in minstrel shows shaped the reality of black individuals in America, in his novel "Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class." The institutionalization of anti-blackness took pace in the form of comedic expression that encroached on the agency black Americans should have had over their identity. Lott wrote about the use of blackface, "We might

almost call it a precognitive form: not as in Geertz's study of the Balinese cockfight, a story one people told themselves about themselves, but an encapsulation of the effective order of things in a society that racially ranked human beings. What the minstrel show did was capture an antebellum structure of racial feeling" (Lott 6). The black man was often shown as a violent, animalistic and unintelligent being who had to be, at the very least, feared. This trend of villainizing a race of people has continued into the 21st century with notable politicians such as Hillary Clinton infamously labeling the African American youth as "superpredators." The entertainment industry follows suit with nearly exclusively casting black men as gangsters and thugs. The implementation of ideologies such as this through cultural and political actors pave the path for legislation and policy making that is inherently anti black. In 1994 sitting president, Bill Clinton, passed the 1994 Crime bill, a form of legislation that was criticized for creating a mass incarceration problem, a problem however, that many historians say can be traced back to the 1970's. According to A two-year study by the National Research Council:

The trend toward increased incarceration began in the early 1970s, and quadrupled in the ensuing four decades. The increase was historically unprecedented, the U.S. far outpaced the incarceration rates elsewhere in the world, and that high incarceration rates have disproportionately affected Hispanic and black communities. (Travis, Western, Redburn)

Black men are only a single example of the way comedy within the frame of entertainment is utilized for the development of oppressive ideologies and the promotion of biased racial categorization. All members of society are subjugated to indoctrination that cements their perception of themselves and those around them preventing the dismantlement of a fragile social hierarchy.

The term "dead" implies that at one point in time racial heterogeneity did exist in the American film industry, and in fact, a glimmer of it did. Robin Coleman, a professor of communication and Afroamerican and African Studies as well as the Associate Dean at the Rackham Graduate School for the University of Michigan, explored the history of Black Americans in television in his book, *African American Viewers and the Black Situation Comedy: Situating Racial Humor*, and their history was surprisingly substantial. Coleman argued that the sitcom "Under One Roof," which first aired in 1995, presented the world with its first multidimensional African American family that dealt with real human problems. However, this era of hope quickly ended when

the show was considered a failure and subsequently taken off the air. According to Coleman what followed was the marginalization of African American culture on television and an attempt to assimilate them into the mainstream. Coleman used the *Huxtables* as an example of the new age sitcoms that were meant to do just that: demanded a passive well-spoken black family that was relatable to white America. This resulted in the creation of black characters who simply filled the role of being black but were in no way multifaceted much less humorous.

To approach the concept of humor in relation to race one must explore less conventional arguments to create room for an abstract but fundamental connection between comedy, race, and in this case, horror. William Paul, professor of film and media studies at Washington University, focused his research within the genres of horror and comedy in Hollywood. He explored the established relationship between the genres and the undertone of similarities in their creation and reception. Paul created an argument around the need for this type of comedy, gory horror comedy that encroached on out boundaries of political correctness, and the affect it has had on society. His commentary on nontraditional humor very much applies to the use of racial comedy. The most important question Paul brings to the conversation is, Why is it funny? In order to explore the exponential reasons behind why audiences find such humor in comedy that is racially fueled could then facilitate a conversation about legitimate race issues in America and how those institutions can be dismantled.

The positive strides filmmakers in Hollywood have taken towards diversifying films must also be noted. Ji Park does this in his article, "Naturalizing Racial Differences Through Comedy: Asian, Black, and White Views on Racial Stereotypes in *Rush Hour 2*." In this article the effects of diversity in the film industry are heavily discussed with a focus of the film "*Rush Hour 2*". It was a film that featured a black and an Asian lead, something that strayed from the norm but resulted in good box office reviews and brought in a large revenue. Despite these seemingly positive strides, many argued that the comedic film perpetuated racial stereotypes and was therefore not a progressive step in the right direction. Sharon Willis's own writings focus on our culture's obsession with differences as a weakness and as a result, Hollywood's dependence on racial stereotypes; another example of the pervasive nature of biased cultural categorization. This phenomenon occurred in "*Rush Hour 2*" and is what sparked such outrage. What both of these authors do extremely well is facilitate a conversation around the use of racial comedy and where a line must be drawn between diversity and the stereotyping of people. Accurate



unbiased representation should be inherently available to people of color; however, the removal of their agency through centuries of oppression has made that impossible so that agency must be granted to them through facets such as film. The appearance of characters that are multifaceted and exist outside of racial tropes is an important step in establishing the reality that there are expansive possibilities of being outside of the racial construct that is race.

Ruth Frankenber, Sharon Wilis, and Elizabeth Kendall bring gender to the table and focus heavily on not only the sexualization of women in Hollywood but why it occurs and the affect it has on society as a whole. When discussing race, gender must always be brought to the table as both minorities and women are marginalized groups however women exist within the framework of patriarchy that exponentially impacts the oppression they experience, thus the relationship between gender and race is profound. Unlike her colleagues, however, Kendall focuses on the traditional patriarchal view of women in Hollywood and how those barriers must be broken down. With the use of a terribly corny plot Kendall creates an allegory for the patriarchal nature of society and its exhausting effects. Frankenber and Wilis on the other hand discuss this but also address the treatment of women of color in society and how that then relates to Hollywood. The marginalization of women and the marginalization of people of color have distinct similarities that affect each other and these three authors drive go great lengths to prove this.

The writings of these authors vary extremely in style, topic, and purpose, yet they all accomplish a single unseen goal: they all critically analyze the dynamic role racism plays in our society and the effect it has on individuals. Comedy is a tool that is very strongly utilized in expanding racial bias in Hollywood. Formerly, this was done consciously, through minstrel shows, but we have reached a time where conscious discrimination has made way for subconscious and passive prejudice that impacts the lives of countless individuals. The inability of people to come together and collectively discuss the institutionalized racism at hand has caused the death of diversity in the film industry as we know it. This is evident with major platforms such as social media being utilized to spread rhetoric that is demanding of change, such as the infamous hashtag ‘Oscars So White’ which took the internet by storm in response to the lack of diversity within our film institutions. People of color are seemingly tossed into films as props and made to be caricatures of their races to deter angry, underrepresented, people of color from “pulling the race card”—a term that is used to undermine the legitimacy of racially fueled discrimination.

Countless studies and authors prove that there is a severe need for change. There must be a revitalization of diversity in Hollywood and the conversations presented by the authors above are the first steps toward a legitimate change in such a major American institution.

It has been established that there is a clear relationship between race and humor in Hollywood, however its dimensionality, and its societal effects must be further explored. Aziz Ansari, an Indian American comedian and actor, especially understands Hollywood's complex connection with racism and his position being a comedian puts him in a very unique position. In his new Netflix series, "Master of None", Ansari tackles all of these issues head on. The fourth episode of the show, titled "Indians on TV", directly attacks the issue of racially-targeted comedy on television. The episode begins with an extensive montage of Indian characters on television and there are overwhelming similarities between them that are clearly offensive. Nearly every single character worked in a gas station and had a thick accent; the only exceptions being an obscure Indian man eating brains, Pitka from the *Love Guru*, and Ashton Kutcher donning brown face. The obvious dependence on cultural and racial stereotypes is itself a major issue, especially for people of color who are trying to deconstruct these roles. Later on in that same episode, for example, Ansari was denied a role for refusing to perform an Indian accent in his audition. This compromise of oneself to fit the marginalized societal view of what a person of color 'should be', i.e. their stereotype, closes countless doors for minorities and also deeply affects an individual's world view. The lack of representation in film and television subsequently forces the children of minorities to reconsider who they can be and what they can do when they grow up when they have very little to no role models to aspire to be.

This form of comedy in this instance portrays minorities, in this case Indians, as a joke. Characters like Pitka, in the film "*The love Guru*", do more than simply perpetuate racial stereotypes, they poke fun at a people, their culture, and their history- all for the sake of being deemed funny. The character of Pitka is a melting pot of everything that is thought to be "Indian:" his clothes, fake accent, and offensively obscene sense of humor (though inaccurate) perpetuate an image of who these people are. To top it all off he is played by a white man, Michael Myers, which in itself propagates a sense of cultural and ethnic superiority that reinforces the perceived superiority of whiteness within the social hierarchy. Does the overwhelming whiteness in Hollywood give writers, actors, and directors the right to degrade and misrepresent an entire group of people in an attempt at humor? Ashton Kutcher's donning of

brown face for a commercial seemingly answers this question. The theoretical framework of modern society has been constructed to reject blatant racism and therefore reject racist stereotypes are wrong, however, Hollywood has convinced the public that it is passable when it is done comically. This allows the biased ideologies of citizens (acquired through indoctrination and propaganda) to exist within the very deepest crevices in the human psyche.

Comedy is one field where cultural insensitivity is constantly written off, excused, or sometimes completely ignored due to its expansive nature and subjectiveness. In many cases comedians, actors, and writers accused of being racist claim it is their form of social commentary. Most recently this occurred with the film "Get Hard." Will Farrell takes on the character of James, a wealthy hedge fund manager who recruits the only black man he knows; Kevin Hart, to prepare him for prison. The irony being that Hart's character, Darnell, has never done jail time. The entire film seemed to be the holy grail of comedic racism, from Darnell's cousin running a gang to James's beautiful, blond, gold digging wife. The film's stars and producers however were quick to defend the film against accusations of racism and instead claimed it was a satirical criticism of racial stereotypes. When addressing the controversy during an interview Farrell said, "Anytime you're going to do an R-rated comedy you're going to offend someone, but that's kind of what we do. We provoke. We prod. We also show a mirror to what's already existing out there. We're playing fictional characters who are articulating some of the attitudes and misconceptions that already exist." (Bennett, Ge)

A handful of critics agreed with Farrell and argued that the film was simply a parody of the elite one percent. This argument, that offensive comedy is a form of constructive social commentary and that it is somehow beneficial to people of color, is reoccurring and whether or not it achieves facilitates a constructive conversation is nearly irrelevant. With "Get Hard," and films like it, the goal never seems to be improving the current lives of marginalized minorities. There has been no evidence that such commentary has ever made an impactful difference on the lives of the parodied. This is where disconnect between offended viewers and defensive Hollywood millionaires arise. Minorities are hardly ever portrayed in a positive light; to many it seems as if the goal of these producers and actors is to crack some jokes and hopefully make a lot of money regardless of who is affected thereafter. This is the nature of the white favoring capitalist hierarchy created within society.

In film there is no space for minorities to step in and help facilitate this conversation that concerns them the most, or provide any type of commentary on how they want to be represented. Not only are minorities having privileged individuals such as Will Farrell, Ashton Kutcher, and Michael Myers take away their right to address such a sensitive issue, but the insensitively in which it is addressed is blatantly offensive regardless of the wealthy white man's intentions. If their thinly veiled racism were more than just ill attempts at engaging in racial issues, and if their attempt to positively change race relations was ever successful then maybe their arguments would be valid. The reality of it is quite different. Racially fueled comedies have yet to benefit people of color. Films of color created by people of color are an incredible tool in creating a sense of agency within a community. A gross lack of investing and availability of resources to communities of color, however, make these films few and far between.

Racist humor in film prevails regardless of its effect on people of color because the world still laughs. We all still exist within a framework that allows for those who are disenfranchised due to the exploitative nature of capitalism to be chastised for their own misfortune. The ultimate goal of Hollywood executives is to make money and comedies have proven to do just that. Simply put, racism sells. According to Statista, an online statistics portal, between 1995 and 2015 comedic films have grossed 39.35 billion dollars, more than any other film genre. In order to understand why these films bring in so much money the question must be asked again: Why is it funny? Or rather, Why do people find this form of comedy funny? In a society where people proudly claim to be "color blind" in an attempt to distance themselves from being called the r-word, a racist, the idea of laughing at racist humor would be counterproductive. A simple theory could be that racist humor instead provides individuals with an outlet where they can freely laugh at stereotypes and misconceptions that they feel have some truth to them. This reaction can often be seen in humor that is impressionistic, such as Will Ferrell's caricature of a black man. This notion is also deeply explored in the book, *Cracking Up* written by Paul Lewis. The reality is, most comedic depictions of minorities in comedy veer far from the reality and rarely have any substance to them. For example, a character such as Apu Nahasapeemapetilon from the *Simpsons* does not accurately represent the millions of Indian men living in America, so where is the humor in his character found? Americans have internalized countless stereotypes against minorities for decades so there is a lack of willingness to release these outdated concepts,

the continued correlation between blackness and violence that is exploited by the entertainment industry is proof of this.

Racially fueled humor serves a greater purpose in society; it perpetuates the perceived inferiority of people of color in all facets of society. The notion that people of color, specifically darker people of color, are inferior permeates all of modern human history. According to anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss, the human mind operates within the framework of binary opposition and this opposition has a significant function in society as a whole. It has been shown time and time again that race is often perceived as a binary opposition, with [varying degrees of] blackness being perceived as inherently negative while whiteness represents superiority, strength, and intelligence. Dehumanizing perspectives have been adopted by modern capitalist society which enable the exploitation of people of color for financial gain with minimal backlash. Within the framework of comedy this phenomenon can be seen in films such as “Get Hard.” According to the Bureau of Justice, “black inmates comprise the largest portion of male inmates under the state federal jurisdiction in 2013”. American prisoners also produce a massive amount of commercially available goods such as lingerie, books, and park benches. The normalization of black criminality through films such as “Get Hard” enables the continued mass incarceration of black men to accrue without backlash. A trend which directly fuels the two billion dollar prison economy. According to research done by Erik Olin Wright, “However, this phenomenon does not only occur within prisons: “In terms of Marxist theory, these results strongly suggest that black workers are exploited at a higher rate than white workers and that racism has generated real, material divisions between races within the working class” (Wright 1393).

There must be a complete societal overhaul in terms of the beliefs surrounding racial humor and when it is acceptable. The reality is, comedy that derives from the misrepresentation, marginalization of minorities should never be tolerated. Conversations on race must be facilitated and encouraged, however, there are inclusive ways of doing so. The creation of racist films with racist characters that are thinly veiled by humor are not solutions to institutionalized racism. The people of color being negatively affected by characters such as Pitka outweigh those that are content and see their socioeconomic environments being positively affected by this comedy. Farrell was correct in saying, “We also show a mirror to what’s already existing out there.” These films and these actors are direct representations of everything that is wrong with our system. Race is seen as a taboo

subject, or seen as a joke altogether in which case there are no bounds, there is no respect.

Creating inclusive spaces for people of color and allowing them to speak on their own behalf would be an immense step in the right direction. Aziz Ansari is seen doing this in his Netflix series but the growth and expansion must continue. The creation of films that focus on race politics but then cater to white America and perpetuate their views on said people must stop. Jokes that cater to racism should not be so heavily relied upon either and their use should end completely. The reality is that Hollywood is an entity that exists and flourishes within a capitalist society and will continue to internalize racial issues within our society for financial gain. The continued marginalization of minorities within the Hollywood sphere must come to an end in order for there to be legitimate and progressive strides towards equality in the mainstream, this would ensure that the formation of cultural categorization is unbiased. It is unlikely that this would be allowed to occur within a capitalist society which explicitly benefits from racial formation within this hierarchy, however, does not absolve us of our responsibility to promote the dismantlement of oppressive institutions. This can only happen through education and an increased awareness of the functions that the ideological norms of society serve.

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Metafiction, Rebellion, and Colonialism in *At Swim-Two-Birds*  
Zack Haskin

Grueling endeavors, strife, and disenfranchisement characterized Irish history during the aeon in which the enormity of the British Empire overshadowed Erin, and although the nation attained independence despite constricting English colonialism, the people's identity remained fractured. Recovering from intrusive surveillance and ideological manipulation is a wearisome undertaking, so it is no surprise when the traces of mistreatment ripple throughout the recuperating society and become reflected in monumental works of literature, such as Flann O'Brien's modernist and metafictional novel, *At Swim-Two-Birds*. Though the book is renowned for its humor and experimentation, an attentive reader may observe fine dialectics concerning identity formation therein, for the numerous quasi-paternal associations and rebellions presented via the subtle relationships between the unnamed narrator and his uncle, as well as those between Trellis' characters parallel colonial connections between Ireland and England. While critics, like Eibhlín Evans, Todd Comer, and Henry Merritt have already combed through *At Swim* to analyze aspects of colonialism, inspect Irish identity, or investigate insurgencies in the story, an approach that synthesizes these various topics is yet to be explored. Thus, integrating the aforementioned critics' specialized assessments of *At Swim-Two-Birds* unveils how O'Brien utilizes clever metafictional forms and content to revise established conceptions of Irish identity by means of literary revolt against an array of tyrannies, from constricting novel forms to colonial coercion to parental domination.

Comer and Merritt offer unique perspectives on references to colonial maltreatment and parental associations within *At Swim-Two-Birds*, and their analyses are reinforced by Evans's survey of rebellion within the novel and study of how revolt contributes to the creation of new Irish identities within the context of established fiction and nationalistic traditions. Through application of drastically distinct literary forms and content, O'Brien launches an intellectual battle, as Evans asserts:

...we can read O'Brien's preoccupation with alternative narrative strategies and innovative writing forms as an attempt to speak his resistance to a particular prescriptive practice, that is, the imposition of an essentialist and nationalist identity on the Irish



subject... the author's comic and anarchic tendencies exist as complimentary elements in his subversive assault on a particular ideology and on the literary vehicles employed in its promotion [...] O'Brien's metafictional tendencies can then be read as deliberate attempts to escape the strait-jacket of an identity model contained within a range of nationalistic narratives (Evans 92-93). Evans does not believe that O'Brien experiments with prose simply to be eccentric, for the author intends to assail typical rhetoric and attitudes concerning Irish nationalism, intellectualism, and religiosity, all of which feed into a common mindset or "particular ideology." Through humor and violations of typical literary norms, O'Brien expresses a desire to evade the fixed mold to which Irish individuals are often relegated. By refusing to conform to customary ideas about writing, O'Brien attempts to open up more perspectives from which the Irish may engage in introspection, in addition to analyzing the more obstinate aspects of the unusual stances regarding the Irish.

Specifically, the combination of style and substance in *At Swim* repudiates typical linear plot paths, restrictive organization, as well as limiting beliefs about heroism, religion, and masculinity, which would feed into narratives that further diminish Irish agency. For example, the narrator expresses a disavowal of prevalent practices in literature at the start of novel, since he states, "One beginning and one ending for a book was a thing I did not agree with. A good book may have three openings entirely dissimilar and inter-related only in the prescience of the author, or for that matter one hundred times as many endings" (O'Brien 5). In addition to at least three distinct beginnings, a "Chapter 1" heading can also be seen, never to be followed by a "Chapter 2" (O'Brien 5). These immediate instances of peculiar writing are not merely in jest, as these techniques instantly acquaint the reader with the novel's playful yet rebellious tone and content. After all, given the entire history of literature, the multiple openings and endings—not to mention an everlasting single chapter—would certify *At Swim-Two-Birds* as a heretical work, an act of sedition that upheaves familiar formulas in fiction. The vast majority of canonical authors would almost certainly censure O'Brien's piece for its numerous violations of artistic customs, but by bucking the system in this way, O'Brien breaks down the prohibitive standards that stop Irish individuals from expressing themselves in a uniquely Irish manner. Regardless, the other factors limiting Irish agency, viz, the topics of heroism, religion, and masculinity, are perhaps best treated by another critic, Comer, for the aforementioned formal revolt is literary, whereas the content coup should be canvassed in relation to colonialism.

While excessive surveillance is not a universal feature of every oppressive regime, critic Todd Comer scrutinizes supervision, concluding that it is the key similarity between Irish people's encounters with colonialism that is exceptionally presented in *At Swim-Two-Birds*. Although Comer later delves into highly complex aspects of oppressive observation and severe supervision through exploration of Foucault's application of the panopticon, his most basic interpretation is as follows:

At Swim testifies to the particular problems of Ireland in the 1930s and deserves to be read as an incisive analysis of 'soft' colonial oppression - the ideological control that operates through England's books and publishing houses. I argue that colonial power is sustained most crucially through a god-like surveillance which governs the temporal and, more importantly, the discursive world of the colonized (Comer 104).

Comer claims that the colonial rule the Irish faced in the early 20th century was less cruel than other strains of repression, (hence, "'soft' colonial oppression"), but English influence through education and censorship nonetheless generated stereotypes, promoted unfair attitudes, and domineered discourses. Through figurative manipulation of time and conversation by overbearing institutions, the identity of the colonized was usurped, demolishing the possibility of authentic Irish agency and independence. Applied to *At Swim*, it becomes evident that Dermot Trellis fulfills the watchful and despotic role that perpetuates power and represents the "ideological control" and "god-like surveillance," for his rule over his characters significantly influences their thoughts and capacities, pushing them to revolt. Therefore, supervision, lack of agency, and colonialism link together as obstacles that restrict Irish identity, yet these are hindrances that O'Brien intends to smash with certain aspects of *At Swim-Two-Birds'* content.

Since the stylistic insurrection has been scrutinized with brevity, the previously mentioned prevalent and limiting beliefs about masculinity, religion, and heroism presented in O'Brien's novel may be examined in the context of colonial surveillance. To start, the unsheltered, estranged, and privacy-lacking figure of Mad Sweeny may be understood as a spied-on subject who suffers due to his offense against religion; he is a cursed mythological character who is prostrated by both the malediction of a priest and the invocation of a hag. In an often-overlooked passage, he declares, "If the evil hag had not invoked Christ against me that I should perform leaps for her amusement, I would not have relapsed into madness, said Sweeny" (O'Brien 82). This statement follows Sweeny's odyssey across Ireland, and although the hag pleaded "For the sake of God," the meanings are essentially the

same (O'Brien 67). Broken down, these quotes emphasize an all-powerful and ever-watchful entity that compels individuals to quarrel to the extent that insanity is a possible consequence of consistent obedience or a refusal to rebel. Petitions like the hag's subtly affirm religion's power, since they are more instances, as Comer might declare, of discourse being ruled by a dominating entity that reinforces traditional hierarchies of meaning, which can be controlled by either a quasi-colonial institution like the church or more overtly imperial ones like England. Physical competitions between men may easily be construed as exhibitions of masculinity, so when a woman—particularly an elderly one—challenges Sweeney, begging to leap “for the sake of god,” he feels forced to act due to the mention of religion and the violation of norms, which can be viewed as an assault on his manliness and status. Though the Sweeney example is somewhat inconspicuous, other instances of similar trials and contests abound, from Finn's to Trellis' torture; still, such illustrations of establishments manipulating discourse are vital examples of colonial forces at work in *At Swim-Two-Birds*, since these are the powers behind the enforcement of constrictive ideologies.

Restrictive systems within *At Swim* also include the paternal or patriarchal associations between characters, which correspond to the relationship between Ireland and its formidable colonial supervisors. The deeper fictional levels of O'Brien's novel concerning Trellis and Sweeney reveal truths about rebellion and colonialism, and critic Henry Merritt focuses on the how these intersect with parental relations:

At Swim carries with it several discourses, of fear of punishment by parental figures, and of ultimate submission to what its narrator, the Nephew, perceives as “authority” ... [it] is a book “about” rebellion against perceived parenthood. Its parental figures are genetic (the Uncle), physical (Dublin and contemporary Ireland) and literary (the novel in English and traditional Irish literature). In each case a revolt is mounted (Merritt 308).

Treating the Uncle, Ireland, and typical novel forms as dominant and powerfully overbearing forces within *At Swim-Two-Birds* is apropos according to Merritt, yet they are also powers against which rebellions are not impossible to initiate. For example, Orlick, the narrator, and Sweeney each revolt against the sway of religious or filial piety, both of which are enforced by colonial structures. Furthermore, Orlick and the narrator blend their literary and genetic parental figures to some extent, and this is revealed in a philosophy espoused by the narrator and applied by Orlick: “The novel, in the hands of an unscrupulous writer, could be despotic... It was undemocratic to compel characters to be uniformly good

or bad or poor or rich. Each should be allowed a private life, self-determination and a decent standard of living” (O’Brien 21). In essence, an author, a parent, and a quasi-colonial power are all amalgamated in the character of Dermot Trellis, because he compels his characters to embody flat stereotypical roles even though they have their own freedom of will and desires; he consistently puppeteers them, which is but one of his authoritarian acts leading to his overthrow. Though in fiction O’Brien’s idea comes off as rather absurd, the general sentiment has political potency, since actual colonial institutions are analogous to the unscrupulous writer, who manipulates people’s minds to accept pernicious principles and dangerous dogmas, such as the idea that one should passively embrace one’s role and circumstances, though they may be shocking and dreadful. Viewing dominant traditions and power structures as unchallengeable parent-like entities coaxes people to become docile and further propagates oppression, but O’Brien’s crafty comparisons and willingness to violate formal norms and content customs exhibits that colonial, parental, and literary figures are not unimpeachable.

O’Brien continues to discuss colonial institutions through the character of Dermot, presenting the process by which such systems can corrupt individuals. Although it is a somewhat fatalistic attitude, it seems that Trellis views individuals as products of their environment, which severely restricts people’s agency and motivates them to accomplish ends that they would have otherwise deemed despicable. His position is summarized as follows: “They grew up to be polluted by their foul environment... Evil, it seemed to him, was the most contagious of all known diseases. Put a thief among honest men and they will eventually relieve him of his watch” (O’Brien 32). In effect, the pernicious effects of an iniquitous milieu are briefly mentioned in a humorous fashion, for Trellis’ viewpoint is that people will become malicious if their surroundings enable it, since immorality becomes more likely to spread as more individuals are wronged and harmed by each other; i.e. they desire vengeance or feel a need to hurt others. Ironically, Trellis neglects to apply his own philosophy to himself, because as the creator of Furriskey, Orlick, and the other characters, he is in complete control of their setting, so when they rebel, he really has himself to blame, as the evil they learned must have originated from him in some way, supposing his ideas to be correct. Moreover, O’Brien’s summation of Trellis’ outlook may be construed as an explication of the colonial system, which may influence the oppressed to become a part of the structure or move them to engage in debauchery. Colonial institutions act precisely in the

manner in which O'Brien describes, infesting otherwise decent people with their defiling systems.

The process through which O'Brien actually reforms Irish identity involves literary rebellion against established novel forms and colonial narratives that constrict agency; although his primary techniques have already been parsed, such as metafictional form and content, a more specific form of revolt has yet to be evaluated. In many ways Orlick is the character that is most similar to the Irish author, for the younger Trellis is overshadowed by his father, who resembles the colonial force of English narratives. Specifically, Lamont and Shanahan's discovery of Orlick's abilities most concisely delineate his motivations, as he is enraged by the injustice that he has endured at the hands of Dermot:

On investigation they find that Orlick has inherited his father's gift for literary composition. Greatly excited, they suggest that he utilize his gift to turn the tables (as it were) and compose a story on the subject of Trellis, a fitting punishment indeed for the usage he has given to others. Smouldering with resentment at the stigma of his own bastardy, the dishonor and death of his mother, and incited by the subversive teachings of the Pooka, he agrees (O'Brien 163). This is a crucial moment in *At Swim*, as the decision to rebel is explicitly expressed and endorsed; Orlick feels tormented by his mother's fate, plagued by his own maltreatment, and blighted by the parental neglect and oppression of Dermot. Hence, a reader may sympathize with his decision to utilize his powers to script a narrative about Trellis, as it is a kind of reciprocal justice. While the aforementioned interpretation of the passage is fairly literal, one can figuratively view the position of the Irish author as identical to Orlick's, since England wronged Ireland in a similar fashion—the "dishonor and death of his mother" can be construed as the defamation and damage to Ireland by colonial narratives about the inferiority of the Irish. Thus, it appears that O'Brien could be recommending that Irish authors rebel against colonial narratives that disgrace Ireland by creating their own tales about England, thereby redirecting the focus toward the country responsible for degradation and exposing their ignominious behavior. Irish identity, therefore, may be reconstituted through an effort of Irish authors to parody or disregard colonial narratives that have limited their creative capacities.

The critics Merritt, Comer, and Evans each allude to O'Brien's rebellion against typical forms and content, portrayal of parental relations, and descriptions of colonial structures in Ireland, yet none of them attempt to merge these various outlooks. In a way, the parental associates, colonial systems, and rebellion fit together like a jigsaw puzzle within O'Brien's novel, and should

be treated as such, for otherwise it is ineffectual to evaluate one topic as entirely separate from the others; after all, how one revolt and change the system without also recognizing the entity that one will fight against? O'Brien's use of Sweeny, Orlick, and Dermot allow him to examine the dynamics and dialectics of colonialism in Ireland, and his implementation of idiosyncratic literary techniques, such as multiple narrative threads, metafiction, humor, and frequent allusions, allow him to break from tradition. With his egress from established narratives, O'Brien sets an example for other Irish authors, who may also evaluate the methods by which colonial domination is enforced through certain characters. Through that move, Irish authors may regain their agency through repossession of narratives and ultimately reform the prevailing conceptions of their nation and its denizens, so they may be regarded as active human beings with proper dignity, unlike their typical portrayals in colonial accounts.

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Looking Down The Road: A Different Perspective  
Nick Huffman

Many readers regard Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road* as being a grim yet touching tale about the profound, persevering love that binds father and son together in the face of destruction. What often escapes view, however, is that the story also presents powerful insights about the complex, poignant relationships between women and men, as well as women and society, in a setting where civilization and principles of social institutions have rotted away. Simply stated, if we are to focus our attention solely on the relationship between the man and the boy, we may miss the subtle implications underlying the relations between the wife and her husband, between the women and the other survivors – and these implications serve to both enliven and enrich the story with a new angle of perspective. This last point is especially true if we choose to view the novel through a theoretical lens which takes into account the assertion made by feminist literary critics Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar that the “extreme images” of “angel” and “monster” have been “fastened” like “masks” upon the “human [faces]” of women throughout literary history (Gilbert and Gubar 812). This concept applies directly to the female figures of *The Road*, for there are plenty of women in the novel who are portrayed as “monsters” and even a few who are portrayed as “angels.” Yet, ironically, it is the very presence of these “extreme images” within the story that points to the possibility that such images do not duly represent the women to whom they are attached, but instead work to obscure the deeper depths of their identities. And so, it is my argument that we ought to look more closely at the “monsters” and “angels” presented to us in the novel, so that we may catch a glimpse of the “human [faces]” hidden underneath “the masks” – so that we may gain a better understanding of the women who lie beneath the constructions formed by patriarchy and the post-apocalypse; their considerations about what humanity has become, their recognition of a bleak and broken world and, in it, the implications of their own identities.

However, in order to better relate the claim that women are being portrayed as “angels” and “monsters” in *The Road*, we must first examine why Gilbert and Gubar have drawn attention to such images in the first place. In their book, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Gilbert and Gubar demonstrate how male authors

have trapped the identities of women within certain social roles by means of attributing certain qualities to women in written works that are seen as upholding certain male-constructed ideals. For instance, Gilbert and Gubar relate the observation that women in literature who are positively portrayed by male authors as “divine,” “virginal,” beings of “contemplative purity,” – a sort of “angel in the house” – are often given the role of the “selfless,” “passive,” “submissive” housewife, who is disinterested in pursuing her own “autonomy”, and whose sole purpose it is to “devote herself to the goodness of others” (Gilbert and Gubar 814-817). From this perspective, Gilbert and Gubar not only argue that male authors use the angelic imagery of women to praise male-constructed ideals about women (like virginal purity and saintly selflessness), but they also argue that male authors use such imagery to buttress the very characteristics and social roles that subordinate and oppress women. So it follows that women are pressured to fulfill such roles in the hopes of becoming viewed as such “angels.” In a similar vein of reasoning, Gilbert and Gubar also make the observation that women in literature who are negatively portrayed by male authors as “snaky,” “freakish,” “unfeminine,” “ugly,” and “dangerous to men” (“monsters”) are women who are often given the roles of taking “significant action on their own behalf,” and of striving for “autonomy” and success in areas besides domesticity (Gilbert and Gubar 819-823). Hence, Gilbert and Gubar argue that male authority also uses “monster” imagery to harshly criticize and express distaste for women who do not uphold male ideals of purity, selflessness, and passivity, thereby pressuring them against fulfilling certain social roles (like being an independent individual). And of course, arising from all this is the notion that, by attaching such oppressive roles to such idealistic and non-idealistic attributes, male authority assigns gender roles and identities to women which are not in accordance with who women really are as human beings – people with personal desires, capable of attaining their own independence and of taking action to meet their own ends. And so, it is these male ideals, these male constructions of what females ought to be, lurking behind the images of “monster” and “angel,” which we must take into consideration as we venture to examine the presentation of women in *The Road*.

An easily identifiable instance in *The Road* wherein one might initially regard a female character as fitting the description of a “monster” can be found in the moment when the man is begging his wife not to commit suicide. We will see how she is not a “monster,” but rather how she is more human than her image portrays, and how she is a woman unable to live with the implications of trying to fulfill new horrific roles as a mother and



wife in the context of the post-apocalypse. However, it remains that we must first get a grip of “the mask” fixed on her character, if we are to unveil the “human face” that lies beneath. Draw scene: “‘I wouldn’t leave you.’ ‘I don’t care. It’s meaningless. You can think of me as a faithless slut if you like. I have taken a new lover. He can give me what you cannot.’ ‘Death is not a lover.’ ‘Oh yes he is’ (McCarthy 56-57).” Looking at the language of the woman’s response to her husband, one may easily misconstrue that she is a kind of monster: for her diction is cold and blunt, unfeeling in its cruelty, irreconcilable, and even selfishly brutal in its reaction to the husband’s pleading for her life. She does not care that he loves her enough to never leave her behind, and she even goes as far to relate to her husband that she is leaving him (and their son for that matter) not just physically, but for something else that she desires more deeply in her heart than any love or support or protection he could provide her with: her own death. And yet, within the terse insensitivity of her responses, we can see how she is not a “monster,” but how she is, on the contrary, assertive of her own humanity and of her individual identity as a woman – a woman who is forced to face the brute realities of living in the remnants of a world destroyed. One has only to look closer at her position in the world and her remarks about this position to see that this is true. We see that her husband is “begging” her, but we need to see deeper that he is “begging” her to stay with him and the boy in order to live a life that she despises – that he is “begging” her to play the role of wife and mother as was expected of her in the conditions of the previous, civilized world (McCarthy 56). However, the male-constructed ideal of the woman-angel has fallen into ruin along with the society that supported it. The woman cannot play the role of a “selfless,” domestic benefactor whose sole purpose it is to “devote herself to the good of others” and to her family (Gilbert and Gubar 814-817). In fact, these are notions from a former patriarchal world imposed on her by her husband, and she sees that she currently belongs to a world where no such societal notions effectively exist as they once did and where the roles of being a woman have shifted. Simply look at what taking on the role of wife and mother entails in her circumstances. It entails that she dedicate herself to the daily agony of surviving on the road to nowhere, that she hollow out her own desires of ending her own pain for the sake of pleasing her husband and son, and that she live in constant anxiety and fear of being “[killed and raped and eaten]” by other human beings (McCarthy 56). It is a new role to be imposed on her identity as a woman which she views as detestable and disgraceful to her own humanity. And furthermore, it is a role which she never intended to have – a role which she

rejects and which she will not be persuaded or pressured by her husband to uphold any further. Thus, it is understandable when she says “I didn’t bring myself to this. I was brought. And now I am done’ (McCarthy 56).”

It having been made less obscure as to why the wife of the man chose to reject the social roles imposed on her identity by both the previous world and the world of the post-apocalypse, it becomes more clear that the “significant action” she takes “on her own behalf” (i.e., her suicide) is not an act of monstrosity (Gilbert and Gubar 819-823). As mentioned earlier, it is an assertion of her humanity as a woman. Yet, what is ironic here is that, though it is she who is portrayed as a “monster,” it is the monstrosities committed by the other survivors that drive her to assert her humanity by means of such suicide. This point echoes throughout her words once again when she bitterly says to her husband that the other ‘survivors’ will “kill” them and “rape” them and “eat” them and that he “won’t face it” (McCarthy 56). Maybe her husband and the other survivors can live in denial or acceptance of these inhumane and contemptible conditions, but she will not position herself to do so. She is not the sexual object of a rapist, or the prey of a human-hunter, or the food of a cannibal – she is a woman and, just as important, she does not consent to becoming either the object or the participant in such roles. And in this sense, we see that the suicide of the wife is not only an assertion of her humanity as a woman, but is a refusal to become consumed by the fear of inevitable death that the other ‘survivors’ sacrificed their humanity to. To take it a step further, what is perhaps the most ironic in this refusal to fear death, this rejection of being forced to play any part in the “monstrous” roles undergone or undertaken by women in the setting of the post-apocalypse, is the realization that in this new, bleak world where morality has been reduced to ash ... those who might have been called “monsters” by civilization have become the new standard of human. Thus, she takes her life because the human she is no longer belongs to the new sense of humanity that has become.

And so with this new perspective, we can now turn to the identities of other women in novel who have accepted the position of becoming survivors, and we can examine their images as “monsters” in order to see how, on the contrary, they are women struggling to deal with the new social roles that have been imposed on them along with a new “monstrous” sense of humanity – a humanity as cold and gray as the dead world it inhabits, wherein even the most treacherous acts society could think of are neither black nor white. Let us look, for instance, at one particular moment in the novel where the man and the boy find the “charred

human infant, headless and gutted and blackening” on a “spit”; the offspring belonging to a “pregnant woman” who they had seen traveling down the road earlier on with a group of “three men” (McCarthy 195-199). This scene does a lot to portray the woman as a “monster,” since it harshly distorts the previous, patriarchal ideals of the mother being the domestic caretaker and the “selfless” devotee to her children (Gilbert and Gubar 814-817). Yet, here we are left to assume that either the men forcibly killed and cooked the infant, or that the woman consented to doing so along with the men for the sake of benefiting her own “wretched” condition (McCarthy 195). Whichever is the case, both routes point to the possible social constructions imposed on the identity of the woman in the contexts of both patriarchy and post-apocalypse. We see that there is an infant roasted over a fire, and that the sacred bond between mother and child is severed and violated. However, we must see too that the men may be forcing the woman into a role of subservience, treating her as if she were some sort of cattle that produces them food. And more over, we must see that – in a world where the the role of mother is no longer bound to the social or moral precepts of civilization, and where the mother and the other survivors are starving and have no means to sustain a child – the act of cooking and eating the child may be considered a practical means for survival, needing no justification in their situation. That is to say, in a world of ash where morality is irrelevant and where social codes have been demolished, the role of the mother and of the human dignity it retains may be said to have disintegrated along with everything else that once was. Therefore, though the woman seems to be a “monster,” it is perhaps she who is the subject of monstrosities performed by others, and she who no longer belongs to such a world where monstrosity is anything but humanity....

And so, having made an attempt to look deeper into the “masks” forcibly worn by a few of the female characters presented in *The Road*, we currently come away with new images of the “faces” that have been trapped so long underneath the constructions that men and society have made for them (Gilbert and Gubar 812). We recognize neither “monster” nor “angel” but only mortal, human features – features like that of individual human dignity, human rationality, and internal conflict of human identity in relation to a changing world. Yet, as human as these qualities are, and as important as it is to have recognized them, we must admit that they themselves leave the visage of the woman incomplete, providing only broad contours about which the details are not specified. But, in a way, this is the point. We can not fill in all the fine details on the face of woman because it is the nature of

identity to be unique to each person in each situation. We ought not to treat one face as if it belonged to all women, all people, for then we only reconstruct the “masks” we’ve worked so hard to unfasten. But with that being said, what we have done here is nevertheless important because, in the recognition that women do not resemble the designs forged upon their characters by ideals of male-authority and societal tradition, we see that we can make the effort to discern the unique qualities of each woman, each identity as we encounter them, with the mutability and relativity of reality. If we can at least try to take the masks off, we are bound to discover some things we may not have discovered otherwise. So in the end, perhaps what we ought to do in the future is make an effort to locate and differentiate other “images” imposed on women that are perhaps not only a matter of them being represented as “angels” or “monsters,” but as other figures in other contexts, which we can work to free from the compelling constructions composed by patriarchy and society.

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Through a Pint Glass Darkly: The Paralysis of Drink in Dubliners  
Marshall Langman

Of the negative assumptions about Ireland that shape our conception of its people and culture, the idea that the Irish drink too much is one that stands out in particular, looking especially at current pop culture and the debauchery of St. Patrick's Day. However, James Joyce seems to be tuned in to this stereotype – so much of what makes his collection *Dubliners* at once grotesque and convincing is his cast of oft-inebriated, predominantly male characters – exploring the seemingly unique Irish ritual of consumption, specifically within the social center of the city's pubs. For Joyce, this ritual is both emblematic and symptomatic of Ireland's colonial dysfunction. Consumption, while ostensibly a celebration and mark of one's social status, also seizes the male characters of *Dubliners* into a paralytic state that suggests an underlying problem of spiritual poverty and the questioning of one's identity in the larger scheme of nationalist politics. Looking at two stories that involve drinking as a crucial element of the narrative within *Dubliners* – “Counterparts” and “Grace” – we can better understand Joyce as not only an observant social critic, but also as an Irish citizen with a deep compassion for his countrymen.

So many of the stories within *Dubliners* depict drinking as a compulsory, but socially acceptable, habit. Farrington, the protagonist of “Counterparts,” punctuates his clerical work routine in the legal office of Crosbie & Alleyne with brief and speedy visits to the pub down the street for a “G. P.,” or glass of porter. According to the endnotes on this story, a glass of porter has “suggestions of drink consumed for medicinal purposes,” which may explain why Farrington orders this specific drink when he is, like many in Dublin where money is tight, under a certain amount of anxiety (275). In lieu of pharmaceutical drugs, alcohol is in this case a pacifying kind of respite from the most minute daily disturbances. “A spasm of rage gripped his throat for a few moments,” the narrator tells us of Farrington, who is being hassled by his boss Mr. Alleyne, “leaving after it a sharp sensation of thirst. The man recognized the sensation and felt that he must have a good night's drinking” (83). Foremost, it is clear that Farrington's first reaction to physiological stress is thirst, which may mean

simply the desire to drink alcohol. Secondly, Joyce's interesting stylistic choice to refer to Farrington as "the man" seems to bear the connotation of Farrington's anonymity, his purpose being merely representative of Dublin men in general. It is possible that we can interpret this as Joyce's own commentary on the pervasiveness of drink as something so automatic and quotidian as to be questionable.

Farrington's craving to drink builds as his work situation worsens, leading to a passive-aggressive encounter with Mr. Alleyne that results in Farrington's nearly being fired. Farrington's alienation in the workplace is key to his wanting to escape to the microcosm of the pub where, after pawning his watch for just enough money to drink heavily, he may have some measure of economic power in buying and receiving rounds of drinks with his male friends. In addition, he has the opportunity to tell them about his difficult day and feel connected again. In his article "Homosocial Consumption in Dubliners," Paul Delany argues that it is these two "currencies" – the drinks and the story – that Farrington utilizes in the attempt to undermine his condition. However, as Delany points out, "when both money and talk are exhausted, the homosocial economy winds up, until new resources can be mustered for the next night of drinking" (2). Farrington's escape into this economy – more familiar to him than the one he makes his wages in – is temporary, but ultimately damaging to his sense of self as he is humiliated by his friends and the women in the pub upon leaving for home, parched and alone.

Joyce paints a similar, albeit slightly more graphic and unpleasant, portrait of a chronic drinker in Tom Kernan, the protagonist of "Grace." Unlike "Counterparts," the story begins with Kernan already intoxicated to the point of unconsciousness, having been injured by falling down the stairs at the pub he frequents. Lying on the floor in a bloody muddle, Kernan comes to with the aid of a curate at the pub who finds a solution with brandy. "The brandy was forced down the man's [Kernan's] throat," the narrator tells us. "In a few seconds he opened his eyes and looked about him" (150). In this sense, alcohol is used for a medicinal purpose, but taking on more than one meaning in that Kernan appears not even to be an alive or functional person without drink, leading to his epiphany near the end of the story that his drinking may be compromised by his "spiritual accounts," which also implies the debilitating debt that has funded his habit. In her article, "Medical Discourse and Drink in Dubliners' 'Grace,'" Jean Kane notes how Kernan's identity is constructed almost solely by his drinking, writing that "Kernan has been drunk not only this evening, but many others as well;

this practice has therefore become his identity” (3). For this reason, Kernan is – like many of the characters in *Dubliners* – immobilized by the desire to escape his senses and, consequently, himself. However, as the story progresses, it becomes clear why Kernan feels this desire: He is an outsider in his own community, a complacent Protestant surrounded by associates, as well as his own wife, who are nationalist Catholics intent on saving Kernan’s soul, leading him away from drunkenness. “Joyce suggests that the community’s location of the problem in Kernan functions as a comfortable distortion,” Kane continues, “for he is merely a concrete manifestation of the cultural and political operations that form them all” (8). In other words, Kernan’s drinking habit is not directly addressed by his homosocial circle – who reinforce Kernan’s habit by drinking stout with him as they discuss the plans for their “spiritual retreat” – revealing that Kernan’s paralysis is not his alone, but the widely unacknowledged crisis of identity rooted in the cultural and political uncertainty binding all Ireland.

The paradoxical situation for the characters Farrington and Kernan as products of colonization is that they both drink, on the one hand, as an act of succumbing to the culture that has formed their identities as habitual, dependent, and anonymous drunkards; On the other hand, they both drink in defiance of that same culture which has suppressed them as colonial subjects. For Farrington, the bitter and indignant feelings stirred in him by the capitalistic Dublin workplace can be washed away – but only for a time before his thirst comes back – by drinking with his associates at the pub. “His body ached to do something, to rush out and revel in violence,” the narrator says, continuing, “He knew where he would meet the boys: Leonard and O’Halloran and Nosey Flynn” (86). Farrington’s response to his paralytic condition, without the ability to exercise his frustration toward his colonial powers, is merely to join in with men who share this condition, before being thrust back into the world where he is expected to function as a kind of cog in the colonial system. “The purchasing and consumption of alcoholic beverages act as a form of exchange for the local men,” writes Delany, “and illustrates, for Joyce’s readers, the men’s lack of forward momentum in society” (1). Tom Kernan and his associates likewise demonstrate this lack of spiritual progress, despite their curious urge to attend a deceptive business retreat hosted by the Church. However, what makes Kernan the focus of the story is precisely his symbolic presence as a reflection of the unspoken inner turmoil of the Irish men who seek to help pull him out of his dependency – their dependency – on the desire to escape. “She accepted his frequent intemperance as part of the climate,” the narrator tells of Mrs. Kernan regarding her

husband (155). This intemperance (bearing the connotation of alcoholism) is, like the image of snow in the collection's final story, "The Dead," not individual but part of the climate – blanketing and frozen. "As Kernan becomes the drunkard," writes Kane, "he serves to encapsulate Joyce's vision of Ireland's paralysis" (5). Joyce's implicit criticism of the effects of chronic drinking both on the individual, as well as the culture that produced him, points to a rejection of the bleak hopelessness that Dubliners, as a whole, seems to inspire in the reader. To this extent, Joyce seeks to investigate the causes of ritualized consumption as a significant cultural marker that hinders Ireland's development, as well as finding a way out of this paralysis to create a stable national identity.

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Life, Death, and Lifeboats: The United States' Moral Requirement  
Towards Syrian Refugees  
Katrina Marks

In her haunting poem *Home*, Warsan Shire states, “No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark. You only run for the border when you see the whole city running as well.” This harrowing glimpse inside the lives of refugees has become a pivotal point in many nations’ international affairs during the Syrian Civil War. A bloody war for both sides, the ongoing struggle has killed a quarter of a million people and forced another 11 million Syrian residents to flee as refugees. These refugees have come in increasing numbers to countries around the world, begging for asylum, but where issues become more complicated is whether or not the nations they come to are morally required to accept these refugees. It is a fine line between foreign affairs and moral obligation, and it is hard to decide for an entire nation what should be required. However, as uncomfortable as the decision may be, the result carries with it the fate of millions of people – a matter of what may be quite literally life or death.

The Syrian Civil War is one of complex history, culture, and politics. It began with the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011 and the arrest and alleged torture of fifteen teenagers painting dissenting messages on the side of their school. Civilians protested and called for their release, to which the Syrian government responded by killing four protesters. These killings increased the demands of the people for more freedom and democracy, as well as the resignation of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. The government became more violent towards the protesters in response, which created a cycle by inciting more protests. As the number of dissenters against al-Assad increased, several militant, political, and civilian groups used it as an opportunity to voice their regrets against the government. Estimates predict that as many as a thousand different groups are collectively fighting against the al-Assad administration, each with their particular demands and agendas (BBC, 2016). Further complicating the political turmoil, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (commonly known as ISIS) has made its way into the Middle East, controlling large sections of the nation. The Islamist extremist group aims to establish a ‘caliphate’ over Earth and demands all people acknowledge the sovereignty of their god. What makes the group particularly dangerous is the

radicalism of their beliefs and the violent and extreme measures they are willing to use to obtain their goal (BBC, 2016). Between the opposing sides of the civil war and the presence of ISIS in Syria, millions of people have deemed it too dangerous to live a normal life and have taken their children and the clothes on their back in search of safety elsewhere in the world.

When it comes to the United States' involvement in the matter, the controversy regarding the Syrian refugee situation lies in whether or not we as a nation are morally required to accept these refugees. To fully understand the situation, though, it is important to differentiate between immigration policy and refugee policy. Immigrants are people leaving their home country to go to another in hopes of finding economical, educational, or occupational opportunity, while refugees have left because they feel as though they cannot survive in their home country under the current conditions (Osnowitz, 2015). They deserve to be treated as a moral category of their own, and this understanding of refugees will be the one referred to for the remainder of my discussion. Also, the legal/political implications of refugee policy and the moral obligation should be distinguished. Political matters such as national security, population size, etc. can be discussed as a separate entity of moral obligation. Whether or not the United States can be ethically required to accept refugees is independent of the effects it may have.

The first step in assessing America's moral obligation towards the Syrian refugees is establishing the threat that faces them elsewhere. If it can be determined that the refugees will die if not taken into America, then there is greater pressure on the United States to accept these Syrians. University of Pennsylvania's student-led "Wonk Tank" contributor Matthew Osnowitz provides the following parallel of the situation. Osnowitz sets a scene where you live in a wealthy neighborhood, and a homeless man arrives at your door asking to stay with you. While you have enough room, food, and resources to provide for him, you are not obligated to do so (Osnowitz, 2015). This line of reasoning mirrors University of Waterloo philosophy professor Jan Narveson's stance on giving aid to the homeless; the existence of someone with more of a need than you does not require you to level your belongings with them (Shafer-Landau, 2010). However, the situation changes when you become aware that there is a murderer intent on killing the man if you do not take him into your home. The homeless man, in this case, will die without your action, therefore requiring you to intervene (Osnowitz, 2015). With this in mind, America is expected to provide asylum to refugees if there is probable cause to assume their death elsewhere in the world.

Also, the very principles on which the United States was founded lend the nation's policy towards one of mercy towards refugees. One of the first legal documents written in this country, the United States' Declaration of Independence, states that, "All men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." The declaration makes no mention of race, religion, nationality, or citizenship, and it is clear that refugees are presently denied all three of these rights. Philosopher Peter Singer brings this to attention and states that each nation seeks to protect and provide for its people, and "refugees [will] receive none of these benefits unless accepted to the country. Since the overwhelming majority of them are not accepted, the overwhelming majority of them will not receive these benefits" (Singer, 1979). If America is to be the nation of open arms and acceptance it sought out to be, it should follow that it should be a nation seeking to help people searching for safety and freedom as its founders once were.

If America is, then, morally required to take in the Syrian refugees, arguments arise as to how much aid is enough. Many anti-refugee voices cite Garret Hardin's "Lifeboat Ethics" as an example of the dangers of taking in too many foreigners. Hardin's article describes the ethical requirements of countries towards foreigners as those of passengers on a lifeboat. If there are enough resources on a lifeboat to provide for a few more people than are currently aboard, then it is not morally unreasonable to deny more passengers so long as the surplus would ensure the survival of the passengers already aboard (Hardin, 1974). This anecdote reflects the opinions of many Americans, as many people feel as though it is our primary duty to provide for American citizens above all else. Also, it would seem as though the United States' responsibility towards the refugees would become less with the understanding that there are other countries that are just as able to take them in as we are. Surely, if the United States does not take in refugees, it does not mean they will all return to their certain death. While this is likely true to an extent, it relies on the willingness of other countries to take in these refugees as well. If America is to deny them asylum with the assumption that someone else will let them in, and they are not accepted, then it is logically permissible to say what happens to them would be America's fault. Also, Singer rejects this idea of "lifeboat ethics" in that it relies on assumed outcomes. The decision not to take these people in relies on projections as to what it means for the country economically and politically as well as what is often false, dramatized media (Singer, 1979). These predicted outcomes scare legislators away from

responding to the ethics of the situation at hand, allowing citizens to believe the lie that is morally permissible to live a life of excess when there are people knocking on our door asking for help.

It cannot be ignored that the United States is, in fact, in a position to take in refugees and protect them from the dangers they face at home. As one of the top ten richest nations in the world, there are enough resources to provide for far more people than reside here. For this reason, it is our duty to extend asylum towards them and provide for them as far as is reasonable. No one is asking individuals to give up their homes or their property to take care of refugees. What is asked, though, is for America to be open to accepting and protecting such a vulnerable group of people through means of granting asylum and aiding the transition to life in a new country.

It is hard to say that any action is morally required of any one person. When trying to say that an action is required of an entire nation, matters become more complicated. While America's responsibility can be logically and ethically expected, in dealing with such circumstances as those of the Syrian refugees, it should not require a moral obligation for someone to take action. No human being deserves to have to flee their home for safety, and to want to help these people should come from a place of humanitarianism - not one of begrudging responsibility. Should anyone on the opposite side find themselves in the circumstances such as those of the refugees, they would be just as desperate to find safety as the people fleeing Syria. It is in moments like these that America can demonstrate to the world that it is truly the land of the free, and that all people - whether citizen or refugee - are welcome to thrive here.

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Building on Engels: Women, Family, Oppression and Class Society  
Jose Olivares

The heated debate regarding the oppression of women and their role in the family has elevated this presidential election, both with Donald Trump's misogynist comments and with Hillary Clinton's attempt to smash the "glass ceiling." For years, theorists and social movements have continually analyzed and fought against the oppression of women. Attempts to explain gender oppression have brought impassioned disagreements to the table, with the historical act of various waves of feminism bridging the gap from academia to the public sphere. The development of identity politics has been instrumental in attempting to fight against the reality of gender oppression in today's society. Unfortunately, focusing solely on identity can present glaring limits, which can more often than not derail well-intended academics, activists, and workers from understanding the root-cause of women's oppression in order to fight it. In order to truly understand the oppression of women, we must look past the veil of identity politics and understand the historic trajectory and societal forces that have brought us to where we are.

It is important to understand our universe is constantly in flux. Nothing is stable. Although rock may seem solid, over time, it disintegrates under the pressure of the elements. Our political and social world changes quickly and dramatically, but it may not appear so if we press our face to the metaphorical page. Only by pulling away and looking at the entire library, can we realize the leaps and bounds history has taken. The development of the family and the oppression of women must be analyzed in this way. It is limiting to study the present situation by only looking at the past few years. We must pull away and analyze the historical trajectory humanity has taken as a whole, in order to understand how we got here and where we are going.

The theorist Frederick Engels studied the development of the family throughout history in his famous 1884 text, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*. This Marxist text uses the method of historical materialism to look at how families have changed throughout time and most importantly, why they have changed. Historical materialism is the Marxist method of studying history by looking at the way the forces of production and the means of production have changed and have affected society

as a whole. In *The Origin of the Family...*, Engels studied the works of anthropologists of his time, looking at the way societies at varying levels of productive development differed in their family structures. According to Engels, humanity has lived through three, large stages in its development: savagery, barbarism, and civilization (87). The former two each contain three different levels (lower, middle, upper), with each level representing significant qualitative shifts in the development of the productive forces.

Anthropologist Barbara J. King published an article on National Public Radio's website, NPR.org in 2012, stating that humans have lived for approximately 200,000 years (King, "For How Long Have We Been Human?"). According to King, around 12,000 years ago, humans began to cultivate agriculture and domesticate animals. As she states, "up until this period, all human groups lived by hunting and gathering" (King). Engels would consider this hunting and gathering stage to be "savagery" and to an extent "barbarism." This is a very interesting and particular distinction. According to Engels, under "savagery" and "barbarism" people also lived in – what Marxists called – a primitive communist society (96). It was not until the agricultural revolution (the 12,000 years ago King refers to) that humans shifted from "primitive communism" – a class-less society – to a class-based society. We will put this aside for now and revisit below.

In his piece, Engels distinguishes between four stages of families: the Consanguine Family, the Punaluan Family, the Pairing Family, and the Monogamous Family. Each of these families contain qualitatively different relations between members of society. According to Engels, under hunter-gatherer societies (or in his terms, "savagery" and "barbarism"), people lived under the Consanguine and later the Punaluan family structures. The first of which is defined as "every woman belonging equally to every man and every man to every woman" (97). According to Engels, this family structure opened the door for "common children [to be] considered common to them all" (96), which means that all children were taken care of, regardless of who gave birth to whom. Engel's theory is that women and men were equal under primitive communist, hunter-gatherer societies. He states: "Communitistic housekeeping, however, means the supremacy of women in the house... Among all savages and all barbarians of the lower and middle stages, and to a certain extent of the upper stage also, the position of women is not only free, but honorable" (Engels, 113). This is a stark contrast to what we see today.

A recent scientific study confirmed Engels' theories. As *The Guardian* (2015) reported, "A study has shown that in contemporary hunter-gatherer tribes, men and women tend to

have equal influence on where their group lives and who they live with... The authors argue that sexual equality may have proved an evolutionary advantage for early human societies, as it would have fostered wider-ranging social networks and closer cooperation between unrelated individuals” (Devlin, “Early men and women were equal, say scientists”). The question then arises: How did men and women become unequal after our hunter-gatherer stage of development?

The Agricultural Revolution changed the course of human history when humans developed methods of agriculture and began domesticating animals. As Engels writes, “the domestication of animals and the breeding of herds had developed a hitherto unsuspected source of wealth and created entirely new social relation” (117). The agricultural revolution opened the door to the privatization of land and resources, which led to men’s desire for inheritance. Engels explains:

According to the division of labor within the family at that time, it was the man’s part to obtain food and the instruments of labor necessary for the purpose. He therefore also owned the instruments of labor, and in the event of husband and wife separating, he took them with him, just as she retained her household goods... Thus on the one hand, in proportion as wealth increased it made the man’s position in the family more important than the woman’s, and on the other hand created an impulse to exploit this strengthened position in order to overthrow, in favor of his children, the traditional order of inheritance. This, however, was impossible so long as descent was reckoned according to mother right. Mother right, therefore, had to be overthrown, and overthrown it was” (Engels, pp. 119 – 120)

Thus, according to Engels, the introduction of private property and the development of a surplus led to the oppression of women by men. As Engels laments, this was “the world historical defeat of the female sex” (120, emphasis original).

The situation only worsened for women, especially when our current modern family, what Engels calls the Monogamous Family was introduced. The family, as we know it, has the very apparent characteristic of the subjugation of women by men. As Engels puts it, “the husband is obliged to earn a living and support his family, and that in itself gives him a position of supremacy without any need for special legal titles and privileges. Within the family he is bourgeois, and the wife represents the proletariat” (137). Since the 1970’s, however, there has been a sharp upswing in women entering the labor force (Cherlin, 251). What we see now is



the development of the second shift, whereby women are required to labor both at work and at home.

According to Marxists and critical theorists, this presents the puzzle of “productive” and “unproductive” labor. According to the essay “Productive and Unproductive Labour: An Attempt at Clarification and Classification” by Sungur Savran and E. Ahmet Tonak (1999), “productive labour is essential for the production and reinvestment of surplus-value, unproductive labour does not create surplus-value and hence is not a source of accumulation,” (116). In this context, this means productive labor is that which is performed at work, while unproductive labor is that which is performed at home (the second shift).

Cultural theorist Nancy Fraser has developed some interesting insights regarding the second shift, and what this means for women. Her recent essay “Contradictions of Capital and Care” (2016), refers to what she calls the “crisis of care.” By this, Fraser refers to one of the multiple crises of capitalism, of which this one deals with “raising children, caring for friends and family members, maintaining households and broader communities, and sustaining connections more generally” (99). Fraser calls attention to the fact that this “second shift” or “unproductive labor” is necessary for the social reproduction of humans. This type of work, Fraser says is “necessary to the existence of waged work, the accumulation of surplus value and the functioning of capitalism as such” (102). In her essay, Fraser stands on the shoulders of Engels and continues to analyze how women’s oppression – especially in regards to unproductive labor – has developed since the Victorian Era up until today. Interestingly, she points out that the separation of productive and unproductive labor became increasingly polarized in the early 1900’s, to the point where the social order began to tremble, threatening revolt. She points out that welfare programs – particularly post-World War II, such as public investment in healthcare, schooling, childcare, old-age pensions, etc. – were perceived as necessary “in an era in which capitalist relations had penetrated social life to such an extent that the working classes no longer possessed the means to reproduce themselves on their own” (Fraser, 109). This was necessary to maintain the social order. Fraser continues her essay, outlining that since the 1980’s, austerity and cuts to social programs have negatively affected the “help” women receive with their unproductive labor. Women are now working longer hours, while still having to deal with the stress of the necessary unproductive labor. Although Fraser does not conclude her essay with potential answers to the problems outlined, she suggests the “path to its resolution can only go through deep structural transformation of this social order” (117).

However, Engels does offer a solution to the problems outlined in this essay. He suggests that to solve these problems, we must turn to a way of organizing society in which class distinctions do not exist. As it was explained above, the introduction of private property and a class-based society served as a launching pad to women's oppression. Only by abolishing class distinctions, will women be liberated from the oppressive shackles. Although Engels did not use the phrase "unproductive labor" in this piece, nor the phrase "second shift," he recommends a way for society to relieve the stress placed on women under our class-based society. He writes:

"By transforming by far the greater portion, at any rate, of permanent, heritable wealth – the means of production – into social property, the coming social revolution will reduce to a minimum all this anxiety about bequeathing and inheriting... For with the transformation of the means of production into social property there will disappear also wage labor, the proletariat, and therefore the necessity for a certain – statistically calculable – number of women to surrender themselves for money... With the transfer of the means of production into common ownership, the single family ceases to be the economic unit of society. Private housekeeping is transformed into a social industry. The care and education of the children becomes a public affair; society looks after all the children alike, whether they are legitimate or not" (139, emphasis JO).

To conclude, it is important to not solely look at our identities and the ways in which women are oppressed in society. But in addition, we must analyze why women are oppressed and how this came to be. Taking the long-view of history can allow us to understand the origins of women's oppression and help us understand how we can fight against it. With the current political climate and the President of the United States bringing to light outdated and revolting misogyny still present in our society, it is more important now, more than ever, to fight against oppression. It is important to fight for reforms that will improve the livelihood of women and all members of our society. However, we should always keep the end goal in sight. Although we are faced with a certain challenge, as Engels and Fraser both suggest, it is necessary to change the social order and fight against the root-cause of societal ills – class distinctions.

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## The Quest for Purpose in *End Zone* and *Ceremony* Dhruv Rohatgi

Nuclear war is inevitably nuclear holocaust. When one bomb explodes over one city, chances are pretty good that the whole world dies. It doesn't matter when the bomb explodes; it doesn't matter where. Nuclear war, then, is what purpose is not: purpose is a way of viewing the world in which one path is better than another. It's a compass in a world with no inherent magnetic field. It's a decision at a crossroads where all paths may end the same. It is life, and purposelessness is death. Thus, facing purposelessness is the ultimate mental ordeal, and finding purpose must be the ultimate destination. Don DeLillo's novel *End Zone* and Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Ceremony* both explore this journey in their characters. The football players in *End Zone* as well as Tayo in *Ceremony* exhibit a lack of purpose echoing the senselessness of modern life and death. In *End Zone*, the characters turn to football for a motivating force, whereas in *Ceremony*, Tayo turns to Laguna stories and myths. While both of these provide direction, they are not equal in providing a filter with which to view the world. The irony is that the Native American stories seem better than football culture at framing modern life.

The characters of *End Zone* struggle with purposelessness throughout the novel. Gary Harkness' description of his life before he joined Logos College gives an overwhelming impression of drifting from place to place and achieving nothing, ultimately moving nowhere. At Penn State, early in his college career, Gary "had not yet learned to appreciate the slowly gliding drift of identical things; chunks of time...like meteorites in a universe predicated on repetition" (DeLillo 18). In the winter, after leaving Penn State, the repetition only grew: "For five months I did nothing," he states, "and then repeated it" (DeLillo 20). Then in the next interval at home, Gary spent seven weeks "shuffling a deck of cards" (DeLillo 22). The eternal repetition and simplicity of those stays between colleges suggests an entire lack of direction. Taft Robinson was in fact in a similar predicament to Gary: he was recruited by Creed on "pain and sacrifice" (DeLillo 237). Perhaps Taft saw these as admirable acts; what he surely did not understand was that pain and sacrifice were not goals. They were only admirable as means toward an end. Pain for pain's sake was only a kind of gluttony, and Taft's focus on pain and sacrifice shows his

lack of direction, his inability to make a decision and choose a path to some real goal. The novel's focus on death is only an extension of this, because death is the ultimate directionless simplicity. Both Gary and Taft are obsessed with holocausts, with the massive death brought about by modern war. "Six megatons for Cairo," Gary imagines, "MIRVS for the Benelux countries. Typhoid and cholera for the Hudson River Valley" (DeLillo 43). According to Mark Osteen, "Gary's obsession with nuclear holocaust reflects the ascetic urge" for an apocalypse that eliminates all "complexities of choice" (151). Gary's appreciation of the simplicity of senseless death is a reflection of his own inner lack of purpose. Another example is in the players' game "Bang You're Dead," where Gary finds a pleasure in pretending "to die in the celebration of ancient ways" (DeLillo 33). Gary romanticizes senseless death as a meaningful ritual in itself, suggesting that he is, in a sense, living for death—the ultimate purposeless life.

Tayo, the protagonist of *Ceremony*, lives an equally purposeless life for a time after he returns from the Pacific theatre of World War II. Tayo is not fascinated with death in the way that Gary is, but he is obsessed with the many deaths he witnessed, all of them fundamentally pointless. The death most close to him is the death of Rocky, which in every sense was an accident of fate. The Japanese soldier who killed Rocky—assuming that he was not already dead from the grenade—harbored no enmity against them. Tayo describes how "they looked tired too, those Japanese soldiers" (Silko 40), and one soldier "pushed Tayo away, not hard, but the way a small child would be pushed away by an older brother" (Silko 40). Tayo does not hate them either; rather, he feels that "he should have hated the Jap soldiers who killed Rocky" (Silko 58), but he does not. In his understanding, Rocky died for nothing. He should not have died—and that affects Tayo more than any hateful murder could, because blame would beget finality and peace. For the greater part of the novel, Tayo constantly experiences flashbacks into his past—back to his stay in the mental hospital, to before he knifes Emo, to the Bataan Death March, to the time before joining the Army, and to his life as a young child in Gallup. The frequency and abrupt, unheralded nature of these temporal shifts shows that Tayo is essentially living in his past—living with the dead, and even when the narration is in the main timeline, Tayo is often drunk and thus mentally somewhere else. The effect of the liquor is to provide him with "a comfortable place inside himself, close to his own beating heart," where "the winds of rage could not touch him." When drunk, Tayo is merely enduring; he is directionless. According to Betonie, this is death: if Tayo returns to the mental hospital, he may as well "go down there, with the

rest of them,” and die a drunken Indian, because “in that hospital they don’t bury the dead, they keep them in rooms and talk to them” (Silko 113-114). The term “walking dead” has acquired other connotations now, but in its purest sense of a lifeless life, it is embodied by Tayo’s purposeless existence—his liquor and his knowledge of senseless death.

Tayo does, however, eventually find a purpose. In the aspect of purpose that provides merely direction, this is relatively clear. By the second half of the novel, he is guided by Laguna stories towards a destiny. Immediately after Betonie’s ceremony that brings Tayo home, he “dreamed about the speckled cattle” (Silko 134). This marks the first time that Tayo dreams about something other than his past and what he has lost. Betonie tells Tayo “Remember these stars...I’ve seen them and I’ve seen the spotted cattle; I’ve seen a mountain and I’ve seen a woman” (Silko 141). Thus the medicine man lays out a future for Tayo, and now Tayo dreams of it. His cure is by no means immediate: after leaving Betonie, Tayo meets up with the other veterans and gets drunk again, but once sober he imagines Betonie “telling him that he’d slept too long and there were the cattle to find” (Silko 155). The repetitive flip-flop between attempting to complete the ceremony and drinking his worries away illustrates forcefully just how different the ceremony is from his original, aimless life. When Tayo meets his old friends after leaving Ts’eh, he drinks beer and starts to believe that he should take a break from the ceremony: he believes that he should “not think about the story or the ceremony,” but rather should just go around “drinking with his buddies” (Silko 224). The contrast between liquor and ceremony is unmistakable. And by the climax of the novel, Tayo has irrevocably chosen the side of ceremony. He states that he “had only to complete this night, to keep the story out of the reach of the destroyers for a few more hours” (Silko 229), and these destroyers were the ones who caused people to “lose their hope and finally themselves in drinking” (Silko 231). Thus by setting himself against the destroyers, Tayo has rejected his old alcohol life and found a purpose.

The football players in End Zone receive, in their own belief system, just as much direction from football as Tayo receives from the Native American stories. The players themselves do not choose their path—but there is an unmistakable path laid out for them. “The football player,” according to Gary, “travels the straightest of lines. His thoughts are wholesomely uncomplicated” (DeLillo 4). The “passion for simplicity” (DeLillo 4), which by itself is a synonym for a lack of purpose, achieves purpose on the football field, because the players believe that there is a direction: forward. They believe that their coaches have a purpose for

them. While Gary sometimes wonders why he is in the middle of nowhere, “being made to lead a simple life” (DeLillo 5), he continues to be sustained by the “conviction that things here were simple” (DeLillo 4). The reason is that football, for the players, is a sort of religion, and its deity is the aptly-named Coach Creed. Indeed, Gary describes Creed as “warlock and avenging patriarch” (DeLillo 5) when he leads the squad in prayer. As Osteen argues, Creed is an obsessive ascetic himself (148): he values self-sacrifice, discipline, and pain as ends unto themselves (DeLillo 200-201). This is a slight oversimplification, since as a sickly child, Creed found these traits to serve him well; this is the nugget behind Creed’s more purely ascetic belief that discipline yields “moral perfection” (DeLillo 201). Through Creed’s influence, the squad’s inner purposelessness becomes purposeful. He creates “order out of chaos” (DeLillo 10). Speaking more concretely, Creed’s religion justifies, for instance, the violence. Shouting with an authority backed by Creed, the assistant coaches urge the players, in no uncertain terms, to be vicious. Violence that in other incarnations—Gary’s obsession with holocaust—is directionless becomes a directed, integral element of football. Inasmuch as purpose is a function of belief, the football players seem to have been given purpose by Creed and by Creed’s game.

And yet in a sense, the football players have not been given purpose by football, since Creed’s football religion lacks one important aspect of purpose: unlike Tayo’s myths, football does not provide its adherents with understanding of the world in which they live. By the end of Ceremony, Tayo understands the role that nuclear holocausts play, because he has fit them into a story which he knows. When Tayo was still sick, Grandma told him of the nuclear explosion she saw, and asked him “Why did make a thing like that?” (Silko 228). At the time Tayo had said “I don’t know, Grandma” (Silko 228), but in a moment of revelation, Tayo fits the puzzle together and knows. He sees how “the lines of cultures and worlds were drawn in flat dark lines on fine light sand, converging in the middle of witchery’s final ceremonial sand painting” (Silko 228). The atomic bomb, he understands, is a part of this, and he understands that the reason he has spent much of his life dreaming of the past—in cold scientific terms, the reason for his battle fatigue—is just that he has “seen and heard the world as it always was: no boundaries” (Silko 229). Tayo has thus placed modern afflictions in context of the old stories. The most telling evidence of his success is the final speech in the novel, as Grandma says “It seems like I already heard these stories before” (Silko 242). Tayo’s story of modern war has been so immersed in the Laguna stories that even Grandma finds it familiar. The stories provide them with

not just direction, but also understanding. In *End Zone*, however, football does not prepare the characters for the modern world. Between seasons, the squad is lost without football; Gary worries that without it, there would be “nothing, really and absolutely nothing, to look forward to” (DeLillo 156). By the end of the novel Taft and Gary have not come to understand modern war and holocaust—they are still fascinated with it, and they still despise themselves for it. Outside the football field, the purpose ceases to be effective, and thus unlike Tayo, the football players do not attain, at the end of their journey, a true purpose.

It may seem unbelievable, contradictory, that one religion can be less purposeful than another—that football can be further than ancient myths from modern life, but in a way it makes some kind of sense. Logos College is placed in the middle of nowhere, as far from the modern world as one can go without abandoning the English language or needing oxygen tanks and the very concept of football includes a distance from modern war; football is often referred to as a substitute for war—a peaceful war. The notion of a peaceful war obliterates purpose. Violence placed outside its geopolitical context is meaningless, no matter how much padding the players may wear. In contrast, myths are the aspect of religion devoted to understanding the world around the storyteller. For Native Americans in the past several centuries, the white man has been an integral part of their world, and thus their stories. The difference between the one religion and the other is the difference between exile and unity.

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## “Stay Woke”: A Reexamination of *The Awakening*

Diana Torres

Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening* criticizes the oppressive nature of patriarchal constructions as they shape women. When the female protagonist, Edna Pontellier, realizes her lack of agency within her marriage, she battles with negotiations between her self-growth and agency and her role as “mother-woman.” Transitioning from Mrs. Pontellier to Edna, she is able to destabilize notions of womanhood and femininity. However, Chopin’s treatment of female liberation fails to extend to the women of color in the novel; in fact, it even relies on this lack of inclusivity. Thus, Chopin’s portrayal of female liberation pushes women of color into the same gendered spaces that she critiques. Using Toni Morrison’s *Playing in the Dark* as a framework for approaching *The Awakening* helps to manifest how Chopin covertly marshals racist attitudes and language into empowering white feminism.

Toni Morrison’s *Playing in the Dark* is a work of literary criticism concerning the white-washed nature of American literature. Morrison observes that the presence of African Americans/black people represented in the American canon function as subhuman foils to white characters within those texts. In other words, black people are conceptualized as shadows outlining the brightness and the glory of America and Americanness—but without the credit: “it assumes that this presence—which shaped the body politic, the Constitution, and the entire history of the culture—has had no significant place or consequence in the origin and development of that culture’s literature” (5). Rather than acknowledge the problematic tendencies of most cis-American authors in their accounts of American experience, other writers and critics tend to turn a blind eye to these injustices towards people of color. She then describes American Africanism/the Africanist presence as a means of “contemplating chaos and civilization, desire and fear, and a mechanism for testing the problems and blessings of freedom” (7). Her claims here point towards a trend in American literature to mediate American values embodied in whiteness by using blackness or black presence as a foil.

As a reader and a writer, Morrison explains that her positionality allows her to transcend from the narrative space/

text available to the reader into the imaginative depths of the writer. Morrison is not claiming to guess at the intention of the nonblack author; rather, she advocates for the use of the Africanist approach as a means of reflecting problematic ideas embedded in the text through the language of narrative. “The fabrication of an Africanist persona is reflexive; an extraordinary meditation on the self; a powerful exploration of the fears and desires that reside in the writerly conscious” (17); thus, she is able to understand the negotiations a writer makes in creating a narrative. However, these compromises should no longer depend on the usage of racial/ethnic oppression—this tradition of silence is a thing of the past. In emphasizing the linguistic choices most nonblack authors make, Morrison forces cis-American authors and critics to reevaluate their language of liberation. So, while Chopin’s novel originally struck its audience with radical ideas of feminism, further close reading of the text reveals its’ lack of intersectionality, once again promoting a polarized distance between oppressed women and oppressed women of color.

Right at the onset of the novel, the reader encounters this commentary combining racist ideology and class. As Mr. Pontellier and family enjoy their time on the beach, he makes sure that his wife, Mrs. Pontellier, knows about his dissatisfaction with her long exposure to the sun: “You are burnt beyond recognition”, he added, looking at his wife as one looks at a valuable piece of personal property which has suffered some damage” (7). To claim that one has spent some time in the sun is one thing; but to say that exposure to the sun for long periods of time fundamentally changes one’s appearance and affects self-worth (which in this case, is unrelated to how Edna regards herself and more about Mr. Pontellier’s expectations) is a direct manifestation of how racist rhetoric is used to dehumanize white women. The use of “burnt” in particular resonates racially-charged associations between skin color and class. Sun exposure to skin can signify one of two possibilities: that either one is exposed to the sun out of luxury, or one is exposed to sun out of necessity (i.e. labor). As the Pontelliers are not sea-faring folks for purpose or pleasure, it becomes obvious that they are a wealthy family that can enjoy the luxury of being out in the sun. Mr. Pontellier’s remark on his wife’s physical condition exposes these associations between skin color and class/status: the Africanist presence is then used to define the distance between wealthy white people and poor people of color. Furthermore, it indicates to the reader that these are issues regarding women without the inclusion of women—Mr. Pontellier does not ask Edna for her input or an explanation. Instead, Edna

responds by obediently covering up her skin without a second thought.

Interestingly enough, Chopin provides a strong parallel to Mr. Pontellier's experience: in this case, it is Mrs. Pontellier who expresses her "concern" with her kids' exposure to the sun: "Edna tapped her foot impatiently, and wondered why the children persisted in playing in the sun when they might be under the trees. She went down and led them out of the sun, scolding the quadroon for not being more attentive" (79). In this instance, Edna is quite preoccupied with finding out more about Robert than she is with watching after her children. But her endeavor does not stop her from coming to a similar conclusion observed earlier in the novel: she is not thrilled with the amount of sun exposure that the kids are getting as they are white. So, she scolds the "quadroon" for neglecting the physicality of the kids. While Edna shortly questions the lack of agency she is afforded within her marriage as enforced by oppressive social conventions, she wastes no time in reinforcing those same structures towards another woman. Furthermore, by having Edna echo Mr. Pontellier's earlier remark, Chopin attempts to validate racism as a naturalized occurrence. Once again, a boundary is reinforced between white women and women of color—putting "the quadroon" at the center of liability.

While Edna enjoys her ability to paint freely and expressively, she does so at the expense of her "employees." One afternoon, she inquired her employees to sit before her as she attempted to capture their "essence" on canvas: "the quadroon sat for hours before Edna's palette, patient as a savage" (96). Because the children's keeper was preoccupied with being Edna's model, the housemaid then steps in to take care of them, "and the drawing room went undusted" (96). Chopin felt it necessary to point out that the "quadroon" occupying the space of a muse was problematic. By adding the detail of the room not being dusted, Chopin makes the argument that black women serve to fulfill a specific function—otherwise, the balance of the household shifts into disarray, especially since Edna vacated her space. On the other hand, when the housemaid occupied that same space, she instead is acknowledged for the "classical" essence of her physical features which Edna observes as an "inspiration." The euro-centric echo of physical aesthetic imposes a hierarchy of white beauty over black beauty. Chopin's lack of detail—other than the use of the word "savage"—shows how people conceptualize skin color and what they value about it. There is no mention of the room's undusted state when the black woman and the housemaid switch places. So, it is only recognized as a problem when a black woman is involved.

Further along in the novel, Edna decides to visit some old acquaintances and witnesses the following: “A black woman, wiping her hands upon her apron, was close at his heels. Before she saw them, Edna could hear them in altercation, the woman—plainly an anomaly—claiming the right to be allowed to perform her duties...” (99). At this point in the novel, Edna has moved out from her marriage prison and into her own space, doing what she likes and going where she pleases. Here, Chopin deliberately points to the black woman’s response as “an anomaly,” which portrays her claim more as an irregularity than as a valid argument for Victor to let the woman do her duty. But when Victor corrects this behavior, he is simply described as being “incomprehensible” (100) to Edna. Edna’s perception of Victor’s response as incomprehensible suggests that what he says isn’t important, and his saying something is so commonplace that it is white noise in the background—but not out of place. Victor’s approach to the situation is to “administer a verbal abuse” (100). Chopin’s word choice portrays verbal violence towards the black woman as a prescriptive course of action—a justified means to an end. Victor’s actions are not questioned—but the black woman’s are. Her outburst is then rationalized as a lack of constraint: “he at once explained that the black woman’s offensive conduct was all due to imperfect training, as he was not there to take her in hand” (100). This instance is not the only one where a white man (in this case, Victor) takes “ownership” for the actions of black women. If they do something great, he proudly takes all the credit—as he did with the gold and silver cake he carefully constructed with his supervision (72). But if they do something not to his standard or liking, he talks about it as a lack of enforcing constraint. Although Edna (at this juncture) consciously resists against oppressive gender norms, she says nothing against the problematic treatment of women of color that she’s surrounded by. Thus, while Edna enjoys her liberation, she does so at the expense of women of color.

Towards the end of the novel, Edna reflects upon her dismal reality, haunted by the social order that she is inevitably unable to escape from: “the children appeared before her like antagonists who had overcome her, who had overpowered and sought to drag her into the soul’s slavery for the rest of her days” (189). Chopin’s use of the word “slavery” undeniably appropriates the inhumane history of slavery; it attempts to replace African Americans/black people as the oppressed with white women at the center. Arguably, the (white) women in the text are unfairly regarded and misrepresented. But to use the word “slavery” when there is no consideration afforded to women of color, when they are invalidated, unacknowledged, and unnamed...clearly

speaks volumes about Chopin's disregard for women of color. As Morrison put it, what becomes "transparent [are] the self-evident ways that Americans choose to talk about themselves through and within a sometimes allegorical, sometimes metaphorical, and always choked representation of an Africanist presence" (17). By subjugating women of color into the gendered spaces that "liberated" or "regal women" (164) attempted to escape from, Chopin fails to acknowledge and validate women of color or their experiences in those same prisons.

While Chopin had attempted to destabilize the patriarchal constructions of women, she stops short from extending that gesture to women of color—even if women of color and other vulnerable groups suffer from the same system of violence (if not more). Left unchecked, the effects of oppressive systems of power become evident when equitable consideration is not given to the vulnerable groups in the periphery of whiteness. It is important to continue the work of questioning and critiquing these texts that seek to shape singular American identities and molds.

The Paralyzing Male Gaze: Following Women's Passive Object Status in Joyce's "Araby" and "The Dead"  
Ashley Winans

The short stories in James Joyce's *Dubliners* do not form a collection, but rather a sequence—purposefully situated to represent the stages of maturation. However, the progression from childhood to adulthood fails. The theme of paralysis dominates this sequence, which sheds light on Dubliners' frozen youth and Ireland's own, as it does not industrialize. However, the ways in which paralysis affects the female characters in two of Joyce's stories, "Araby" and "The Dead," is in need of illumination. Sheila Conboy's analysis of the "male gaze" and Joyce's treatment of female bodies in her article, "Exhibition and Inhibition: The Body Scene in *Dubliners*," reveals women as paralyzed passive objects to the narrators, themselves, and the audience. Drawing from Conboy's article as well as G.M. Leonard's Lacanian informed close reading of "Araby," this essay will highlight women's role in structuring a male subject at the expense of being desiring subjects themselves in order to inform a more dynamic reading of Joyce's works. Form and content coalesce as Joyce distributes the theme of paralysis to each stage in this cyclical sequence, which produces a failed—yet unified—narration of maturation.

The third story in Joyce's sequence, "Araby," follows a young Dubliner boy's literal and theoretical gaze at a neighborhood girl. Known only through her relation to a male character, Mangan's sister functions as an object of desire for the boy as well as an escape from the dark and "flaring streets, jostled by drunken men and bargaining women," in his paralytic town (Joyce 22). The boy watches Mangan's sister from a distance and claims, "I kept her brown figure always in my eye" (Joyce 30). The boy "keeps" or clings to an idealized and exoticized image of the female body, which structures an active male subject and a passive female object. G.M. Leonard expands on this by suggesting, "The boy sees Mangan's sister as a representation of what Lacan calls 'The Woman'; he imagines who he has become by positing his 'completeness' on her 'lack'" ("The Question and the Quest," 461). The misrecognized image of Mangan's sister, which "lacks" personhood, informs his subjectivity.

Arguments supporting the existence of female desire or agency in "Araby" are problematic. After an unspecified amount of time

spent watching Mangan's sister from a distance, "At last she spoke to [the narrator]" (Joyce 23). She asks the boy if he is going to the upcoming Dublin bazaar called Araby. Since, "she would love to go," but cannot, the boy decides to attend the bazaar and bring her back a gift (Joyce 23). This moment indicates that Mangan's sister does have desire. However, the narrator appropriates her desire of going to Araby as his own. Paralysis sets in as the boy, trapped in his monotonous daily life, anticipates the event and the arrival of his uncle to give him money. Late to the bazaar, the unnamed young boy witnesses a woman flirting with two men in front of the only stand open. Paralyzed and humiliated by this scene, his idealization dissipates as "[the shop girl's] display of desire beyond his representation of what the feminine is—subverts his fiction of Mangan's sister" (Leonard 466). However, his epiphany does not suggest progress and maturation. Conboy states, "The young narrator merely exchanges one distorted image of the female body for another—the "virgin" for the "whore"—either case, he retains his masculine position as definer and relation to the female other; she exists for the reader" ("Exhibition and Inhibition," 409). At the end, the narrator's eyes, which once gazed upon Mangan's sister, are now "gazing up into the darkness" and seeing himself "as a creature driven and derided by vanity" (Joyce 28). Considering himself as a "creature," the boy still does not have a confident sense of his own subjectivity by the story's end.

Although "Araby" is the final installment of the childhood stage in the sequence, childish disillusionment and paralysis continues throughout *Dubliners*. As Joyce indicates, the last story in the sequence, "The Dead," is included in the section of adulthood or, more specifically, "public life" (qtd. in "Exhibition and Inhibition," 409). Although Conboy suggests "The Dead" contains "perhaps the most fully developed representation of the female body in *Dubliners*," a familiar and paralyzing male gaze is present in this story as well ("Exhibition and Inhibition," 412). Implementing free indirect discourse, the short story begins by entering the consciousness of Lily, a caretaker's daughter, who is inaccurately described as having been "literally run off her feet" (Joyce 175). However, the focus abruptly shifts to follow a male gaze through Gabriel Conroy's thoughts and movements. Similar to the young boy and Mangan's sister in "Araby," Gabriel's interactions with Lily are misrecognized. Gabriel smiles after Lily mispronounces his last name, and he later infers, "I suppose we will be going to your wedding one of these fine days with your young man, eh" (Joyce 177). His assumption that Lily will marry a man highlights her "lack." Her colloquial Dublin accent and lower class status also contribute to Gabriel associating Lily as an incomplete subject

without having relation to a man, like Mangan's sister. Despite Lily defiantly objecting to her object status by asserting, "The men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you," Gabriel tips her and flees her presence (Joyce 178). Embarrassed once again by a false recognition of "The Woman," Joyce's male character develops a self-consciousness regarding his own subjectivity, which reflects his adolescent masculinity.

At the annual Christmas party, paralysis is evident. As the piano plays a familiar Irish ballad, Gabriel "gaz[es] up at his wife," and muses, "if he were a painter he would paint her in that attitude. Her blue felt hat would show off the bronze of her hair against the darkness and the dark panels of her skirt would show off the light ones" (Joyce 211). Gretta, his wife, is unaware and, subsequently, paralyzed by the male gaze in this scene. In another moment of misrecognition, Gabriel's fantasies about reconstructing her "attitude" on a canvas "reinforces the reader's understanding of her as object created for man's pleasure" (Conboy 412). Later, Gretta reveals the mournful memories of a past love recalled by the "distant music," which prompts Gabriel to reevaluate his misappropriated gazing. However, instead of confronting his patronizing and reimagining of women, Gabriel watches the snow blanket Ireland and decides, "[t]he time had come for him to journey westward"—to escape Ireland (Joyce 225). "The Dead" ends ambiguously without certainty that Gabriel will change how he informs his own subjectivity.

Although the male gaze naturalizes Mangan's sister and Gretta as passive objects, the female characters are sometimes aware of their desired status to men. In "Araby," Mangan's sister "turned a silver bracelet round and round her wrist," while she spoke to the narrator (Joyce 23). Conscious of the boy's Orientalist image of her, she charms the boy into going to the bazaar for her. As for Gretta, she tells Gabriel about her dead lover, Michael Furey, and comments, "I think he died for me" (Joyce 221). These women notice the men watching and desiring them. However, rather than agency, this is internalization of the male gaze. Conboy states, "Dubliners shows the female body objectified and mystified by the male gaze . . . In addition, women are seen to be trapped by their own images of themselves ("Exhibition and Inhibition," 406). Instead of structuring these women as active subjects with desires of their own, Joyce paralyzes them by limiting their sense of self to their desirability to men.

Despite the sequence highlighting the maturation process, *Dubliners* reveals characters trapped in perpetual youth and disillusionment by the inescapable male gaze. This gaze not only affects the characters, but the audience as well. However, due to



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these stories' positioning at the end of the childhood and public life stages, "an outright rejection of the masculine claim on desire, or at least a close observation of what has been left out of viewer's gaze that might have empowered the female character or might yet empower the female reader" is demanded (Conboy 415). Instead of readers assuming closure and escape from the paralysis that pervades Dublin life, highlighting the male gaze activated in "Araby" and "The Dead" attempts to break the destructive and paralytic cycle.

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