



The Channel

XV

The Channel

McGILL UNIVERSITY



Moko Jumbies
Ava Ellis

EDITORS

Michael Anders
Sophie Semeniuk

Haider Ali
Tina Barbusci
Rachel Barker
Chiara Dias Caronni
Nicole Guan
Ramsey Headrick
Julie Jacques
Natasha Kinne
Lydia Lepki
Alyssa Sequeira
AnnaClare Sung
Lucy Zavitz

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

With great pleasure, we present to you Volume XV of The Channel. For the past seventeen years, we have had the privilege of reading, editing, and publishing McGill undergraduate students' extraordinary work. The eight essays our team has selected for the fifteenth edition are no exception and illustrate the ever-continuing creativity and perceptiveness of English students.

In the first Channel journal from 2007-2008, the editors wrote that they hoped the journal would be a "trial of rejuvenation." This year's essays have rejuvenated us for their impressive advancement and discussion of novel ideas. Our authors bring new life and interpretation to the works of Shakespeare and Charlotte Brontë. They are also in touch with contemporary authors as they discuss the works of Percival Everett and M. NourbeSe Philip. We hope that these essays within rejuvenate you, as the first editors intended.

This journal would never be possible without our hardworking team of editors, as well as all those who submitted to and wrote for The Channel. It has been a pleasure to work with you and we thank you for the time and wisdom you have poured into this year's edition. Thank you as well to the Arts Undergraduate Society and the Department of English Students Association for their assistance with funding and support throughout the year.

Thank you for a wonderful year and farewell,

Michael Anders and Sophie Semeniuk
Co-Editors in Chief

Find our full selection of essays @ mcgillchannelundergraduaterreview.com

CONTENTS

THE ARTISTIC DEATH AS EMASCULATION: GENDER IN EVERETT'S <i>ERASURE</i>	8
UNDERSTOOD THROUGH BOURDIEU	
Millie Roberts	
READING WITH CLARITY: INTERTEXTUAL DEFAMILIARIZATION OF	13
FICTITIOUS MORALITY SYSTEMS IN PUSHKIN'S <i>EUGENE ONEGIN</i>	
Lucy Zavitz	
PHANTOM PAST, PURE FUTURE: COLONIAL HAUNTINGS AND TEMPORAL	24
DISRUPTION IN <i>JANE EYRE</i>	
Qian Xun Tie	
COOPERATIVE CREATION IN JOHN MILTON'S <i>PARADISE LOST</i>	31
Natasha Kinne	
SOCRATES' HAMARTIA: A DERRIDEAN ANALYSIS OF LOGOCENTRIC	37
FALLACIES IN PLATO'S <i>APOLOGY</i>	
Flora Situ	
TONGUE IN CHEEK: FROM THE METAPHOR TO THE LITERAL	38
Faith Ruetas	

PLANT-POWERED SHAKESPEARE: BOTANICS AND GENDERED VIOLENCE IN <i>TITUS ANDRONICUS</i> AND <i>RICHARD II</i>	51
AnnaClare Sung	
THE PROBLEMATIC OF FORCE IN M. NOURBESE PHILIP'S "ZONG! #1"	60
Haider Ali	
—	
VÖLKERSCHLACHTDENKMAL INTERIOR	cover
Yanran Mou	
MOKO JUMBIES	3
Ava Ellis	
AWAKE	36
Natalie Chang	
UNTITLED	58
UNTITLED	59
Ramsey Headrick	
TWO FISH	67
Yanran Mou	

The Artistic Death as Emasculation: Gender in Everett's *Erasure* Understood Through Bourdieu

by Millie Roberts

Bourdieu's "The Field of Cultural Production, or the Economic World Reversed," outlines the social relativity of the literary field, expounding the ways its members are linked and ultimately defined by the relationships between them. The field, as defined by Bourdieu, is the realm of relations between every agent that interacts with literature, from readers, to writers, to publishers, to the books themselves, and so on (Bourdieu 30). Two important forms of capital within this field are the financial, evaluated on the scale of economic wealth, and the symbolic, evaluated on the scale of cultural prestige. What dictates these evaluations of capital is the field's doxa, the latent principles held as unconscious truths by members of the field. The text holds many noteworthy insights into cultural production, however, it lacks nuance concerning racial and gender identity. Percival Everett's novel, *Erasure* (2001), works to furnish this absence, as its narrative explicates the experiences of being a Black author within the literary field. The novel also, although less directly, depicts the field's gender dynamics and its implications for women authors. *Erasure*'s main character, Monk Ellison, undergoes a crisis respecting his artistic integrity that is enmeshed in the wider literary field's devaluation of women's symbolic capital; as he becomes more commercialized, he becomes more emasculated. While Bourdieu did not integrate intersectionality in *The Field of Cultural Production*, his theories inform how identity shapes certain positions within the literary field. In the doxa of the literary field, women routinely face intellectual delegitimization, barred from the symbolic capital that their male counterparts can access. Monk is guilty of this mindset; his relationship with Juanita Mae Jenkins and her novel, *We Lives in Da Ghetto* is fraught with projected threats to his masculinity. Ultimately, Bourdieu's theories regarding cultural production manifest themselves in Everett's writing,

ROBERTS

as Monk considers his commercialization simultaneously as an artistic death and as something feminized, reproducing the pre-existing misogynistic ideals within the American literary field that invalidates the intelligence and talent of women authors.

Erasure demonstrates an unbalanced distribution of gender-based capital within the American literary field. The National Book Award (NBA) in this narrative illuminates this issue: of the five judges, only one is a woman, and of the finalists, only one author has a recognizably feminine name. Symbolic capital, Bourdieu describes, is assigned to cultural artifacts that are “socially instituted as works of art” for their “production value” as decided by “producers of the meaning and value of the work—critics, publishers... and the whole set of agents whose combined efforts produce consumers capable of knowing and recognizing the work of art as such” (Bourdieu 37). Within the field, literary prizes hold a high degree of symbolic capital—to be a judge or finalist both requires and endows a certain degree of this capital. Exemplified in *Erasure*, the judges for the NBA have all won awards themselves and are thus recipients of some degree of literary prestige. The disproportionate ratios of gender, therefore, indicate that within the field, women and their work produce less symbolic capital. It follows, then, that the positions represented by those involved in the NBA reflect the field’s doxa regarding the distribution of capital.

Whether he is conscious of it or not, Monk perpetuates this patriarchal doxa. What he calls “serious literature” (Everett 184) is solely authored by male writers, and in contrast, every woman in the literary field that Monk personally encounters is depicted negatively. He expresses admiration for male-penned novels such as *Crime and Punishment* (143) or *Finnegan’s Wake* (185), yet neither Linda Mallory nor Ailene Hoover are afforded any grace in the face of their flaws. Monk emphasizes their stereotypically feminine attributes as a decided estimation of their intellectual or literary capacity. For her unashamed interest in sex, Mallory is scathingly described as a “Rottweiler on a porkchop,” who, “before her ears perked to male attention... could be called attractive” (11). Almost as an afterthought, Monk then asserts that “she was completely without literary talent” (11). Hoover faces similar disparagement. In the one instance Monk meets Hoover in person, Monk presents her to the reader as excessively feminine, wearing “too much perfume” and embellished with a “heart-shaped pendant” (245). Once again, Monk—after degrading Hoover for her feminine characteristics—goes on to insinuate her lack of intelligence, as she enters the elevator and “presses the button, though it has obviously been pressed” (245), implicitly conveying a correlation between femininity and ineptitude. *Erasure* proves that to be a woman within the literary field is to face a delegitimization of one’s intellect and to earn a position of lower symbolic capital due to patriarchal social structures.

ROBERTS

Monk's interpretation of his female peers as symbolically deficient is embedded in Bourdieu's explanation that the relationship between a piece of literature produced at the "large-scale" is often negatively attached to its symbolic capital, stating that "the field of large-scale production" is "symbolically excluded and discredited" to "exclude writers and artists who have produced for the market" (Bourdieu 39). The realm of symbolic capital rejects economically successful literature for its obedience to the financial market rather than adhering to artistic inclination. Bourdieu thus asserts two orientations to power (i.e. the market): the heteronomous, where art is considered valuable in terms of the encompassing field of power, and the autonomous, where art is produced independently of power structures. These relations of power dictate the movements available for an actor in the literary field to execute what Bourdieu coins as their "space of possibles." Considering that the feminine sphere has reduced access to symbolic capital, the space of possibles for female writers is more limited to the heteronomous than men, and thus a binary is established: the male/high literary/autonomous sphere, and the female/commercialized/heteronomous sphere. In *Erasure*, Juanita Mae Jenkins' novel explicitly inhabits the large-scale, commercialized, heteronomous, and feminized space, as a "runaway bestseller" (Everett 39). Yet, despite being described as a "masterpiece of African American literature" (39), *We Lives in Da Ghetto* is not even considered for the NBA, whereas *Fuck!*, Monk's novel, ultimately wins the prize. Although the latter is nearly a duplicate of the former, Jenkins, as a commercialized female writer, lacks the symbolic capital to win the award.

The anger Monk holds for *We Lives In Da Ghetto* is no secret to the reader: upon reading the Atlantic Monthly's glowing review of Jenkins' novel, Monk is so visibly upset that the woman sitting next to him asks, "Is there something wrong?" (40). Monk's attitude towards Jenkins' novel is fueled largely by the novel's overtly racist regurgitation of the stereotypical Black 'ghetto lifestyle' which is then essentialized as representative of all African-American life. As a novel of economic capital, however, *We Lives In Da Ghetto* simultaneously operates as a feminized threat for Monk, an affront to his masculine, literary identity as a highly restricted author who writes novels "too difficult for the market" (42). The emasculatory power of feminized, large-scale literature is exemplified when Monk catches a glance at a copy of *We Lives in Da Ghetto* while having sex with Marilyn. Instead of proceeding, he instead interrogates her about the novel. He tells Marilyn that he finds the "book an idiotic, exploitative piece of crap and [he] can't see how an intelligent person can take it seriously" (188), causing her to cry. Interrupting sex, an emblem of masculinity, to combat the encroaching presence of a feminized, mass-market novel symbolizes his anxiety regarding the emasculatory properties of large-scale production. In this battle, Monk is ultimately overpowered by Jenkins; his

ROBERTS

relationship with Marilyn ends afterward. Through this scene, *Erasure* demonstrates that the feminine sphere of large-scale works that earns a high degree of economic capital is not only de-intellectualized in the literary field, but is also understood to be a threatening entity to the masculine, restricted, and culturally wealthy market.

The anxiety that Monk suffers over his waning artistic integrity after publishing *Fuck!* pseudonymously as Stagg R. Leigh weighs heavily on his conscience. Grappling with being a “sell out” due to *Fuck!*’s commercial success, he is also disappointed in himself for “propping up...the artistic traditions that [he has] pretended to challenge” (156). Although Monk wrote *Fuck!* to combat and denaturalize the racist stereotypes that pervade *We Lives in Da Ghetto* and so-called African American literature, he ultimately propagates them. This tension manifests itself in a “story idea” which he details to the reader, interrupting the flow of the text and indicating a quick break in Monk’s narrative consciousness as if he were struck by inspiration:

a man marries a woman whose name is the same as that of his first wife. One night while making love he says her name and the woman accuses him of calling out the name of his first wife... He tells her that he was not thinking of his first wife, but she says she knows what she heard. (30)

Monk offers no further explanation for the motive of this story, but is contextualized within the novel’s wider doubling thematic: the second wife operates as a double of the first wife. To correlatively position *Fuck!* as a double of Jenkins’ *We Lives in Da Ghetto* reveals Monk wrestling with the fact that, contrary to his intentions for *Fuck!*, both his and Jenkins’ novels exist as identical pieces of work; in essence, reading one aloud would sound almost identical to the other, regardless of his objective of mockery. Both *Fuck!* and *We Lives In Da Ghetto*, texts Monk despises for their low literary value and commercial success, are characterized as women in this segment, thus mirroring the association of the feminine and mass-market art in Monk’s psyche; as a work of large-scale production, he positions *Fuck!* as a feminine object. Monk turmoils over his double, Stagg R. Leigh, who is simultaneously a double for Juanita Jenkins, a woman. Monk’s artistic death and the birth of Stagg R. Leigh are imbricated with fears of emasculation due to the patriarchal impulse to reject the feminine for its associations with intellectual inferiority.

The literary field’s division of masculinity and femininity in relation to symbolic capital and scale of production is prominent in Monk’s artistic and psychological journey throughout *Erasure*. The female population of the field is portrayed as having a lower capacity for symbolic capital, which is then entangled with connotations of commercialization—evident in Monk’s relationship to Juanita Mae Jenkins’ novel, *We Lives in Da Ghetto*. As Monk wrestles with the depreciation of his artistic integrity with the publication of *Fuck!*, he faces his own anxieties

ROBERTS

of emasculation. The binary of gendered literary spheres is thus reproduced, minimizing the access female writers have to prestige; the glass ceiling remains transparent, but even still, solid.

WORKS CITED

Bourdieu, Pierre. "The field of cultural production, or: The Economic World reversed." *Poetics*, vol. 12, no. 4–5, 1983, pp. 311–356, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-422x\(83\)90012-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-422x(83)90012-8).

Everett, Percival. *Erasure*. Graywolf Press, 2011.

Reading with Clarity: Intertextual Defamiliarization of Fictitious Morality Systems in Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*

by Lucy Zavitz

In short, our gentleman became so immersed in his reading that he spent whole nights from sundown to sunup and his days from dawn to dusk in poring over his books, until, finally, from so little sleeping and so much reading, his brain dried up and he went completely out of his mind. He had filled his imagination with everything that he had read, [...] and as a result had come to believe that all these fictitious happenings were true; they were more real to him than anything else in the world.

—Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, 27.

Alexander Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* is a decidedly intertextual narrative both inside its fictional reality and in its composition. Pushkin aligns his characters with various literary texts and heroes to aid in characterization, develop complex personal motivations, and emphasize the idealism of the fictional world. Pushkin uses his characters' taste in literature to explain their values and desires to the reader—and these interactions with other texts develop a character's understanding, or rather misunderstanding, of the world. As an aspiring libertine, Eugene Onegin is impressed with the amorality and cynicism of Lord Byron's poetic satires. Conversely, Tatyana is affected by the supremely good and virtuous heroines depicted in the sentimentalist novels of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Samuel Richardson, and the poet Lensky admires the Sturm und Drang movement. Indeed, such references, on an authorial level, serve to demonstrate Pushkin's immense proficiency in the European literary tradition and thus legitimize his authority as a perceived outsider, but they also allow Pushkin to explore the moral systems presented in fiction within his own text. By emphasizing the difference between

ZAVITZ

existing heroes and the lived world of his characters, Pushkin brings his narrative out of abstract perfection into verisimilitude. Eugene, Tatyanna, and Lensky emulate and act according to the beliefs and values reflected in the books they read, and their respective conflicts illustrate the irreconcilability of fictitious moralities. Eugene amends his perspective too late, but Tatyanna frees herself from the idealized world of her novels after she learns to read correctly. Reading, therefore, becomes a method of clarification: a way for the characters to engage with the intricate contradictions of moral logic. In this essay, I will argue that Pushkin juxtaposes literary ideals in *Eugene Onegin* to defamiliarize the notion of a comprehensive ethical system. In doing so, Pushkin illuminates a space between broken ideals that is entirely sympathetic to heroes and villains alike.

Intertextuality is often invoked at the formal or narrative level to call attention to the text as a work of art. In *Eugene Onegin*, Pushkin alludes to outside works, not just in form or with narration, but within the realities of the characters' experiences. Pushkin uses his characters' literary tastes to describe their attitudes about the world. Fiction illuminates the ideal selfhood that the characters strive to assume. We, as readers, tend to forget that the fictional world exists within a system of perfect morality, where the benevolent are rewarded, and the villainous are invariably punished. Of course, this structure of poetic justice is untenable in the 'real' world, as one cannot dogmatically apply the logic of the ideal to lived experience. Nevertheless, literature remains an essential method of working through the social, political, and philosophical problems afflicting society. Therefore, the question becomes: how can we rectify this 'Quixotian' problem of misreading? In *Eugene Onegin*, Pushkin portrays his characters in contiguity with their reading to address this issue. Instead of glorifying specific qualities or personal histories, Pushkin positions his heroes at a junction between the real and fictional worlds. Unlike the "fervent author[s]" of Tatyana's older books, who "show / The hero in [their] work of fiction / Endowed with bright perfection's glow," Pushkin's characters are far from idealized, a fact demonstrated by this implied comparison to other works of literature (3, XI, 2-5). Pushkin's characters internalize their reading and define themselves by their ability to imitate the merits of the books they admire. Like real people, these characters, plagued by problems of contravening ambiguous moral systems, can never perfectly adhere to the precise moral duties that exist in fiction.

With this established disjunction between reality and fiction, Pushkin uses intertextuality as a mode of 'defamiliarization' in *Eugene Onegin*. In his essay, "Art as Device," Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky coined the concept "остранение" or 'making strange' as a technique in which familiar things are represented in an

unfamiliar way in art to achieve a more complex understanding of the world. Shklovsky writes that “[t]he purpose of art, [...] is to lead us to a knowledge of a thing through the organ of sight instead of recognition. By ‘estranging’ objects and complicating form, the device of art makes perception long and ‘laborious’” (6). I argue that Pushkin’s intertextuality “estranges” common or well-known literary moral systems from our understanding of reality. He inserts widely read fiction into his narrative’s reality to critique the role of the reader. Where the poor reader will see the artistic ideal and attempt to emulate it exactly, the competent reader will understand art as a tool that allows us to see the world from new perspectives. Indeed, art challenges our “perception” of reality: these recognizable conceptions of the villainous Don Juan or the virtuous heroine are pervasive not merely because they reflect the world but because they destabilize a reader’s reality. Pushkin’s narrator is conscious of literature’s effect on a reader’s conception of reality and uses intertextuality to defamiliarize the moral systems from these fictitious worlds.

The most frequent, and perhaps the most striking, literary allusion in *Eugene Onegin* is to Byron and his satiric epics. Given the fact that Pushkin read the “first five cantos” of Byron’s *Don Juan* “during the crucial time when Onegin [as a composition] took on its decisive shape and tone,” it is reasonable to assume that Byron’s epic greatly influenced Pushkin in *Eugene Onegin* (Garrard 432). However, defending an extended comparison between *Eugene Onegin* and *Don Juan* is difficult. Despite commonality in subject and poetic style, the two works seem to have more differences than similarities. For one, Byron’s mock epic inverts the traditional understanding of Don Juan as a malicious womanizer into the victim of ignoble seductresses, while Pushkin’s hero participates in his immoral lifestyle with direct intention (though his misdeeds become forgivable). Secondly, Byron’s narrator keeps an ironic distance from the affairs of his characters and often comments on how he is not at “fault” for their indiscretions: “scandal’s my aversion —I protest / Against all evil speaking, even in jest” (I, 80, 8; 51, 7-8). Byron’s narrator occupies a position high above the affairs of his characters, and his disillusioned scrutinization satirizes their actions. Pushkin’s narrator, meanwhile, is not only a “good friend” of Eugene but also depicts his characters with sympathy even when he tires of telling the story: “Although I cherish / My hero and of course I vow / To see how he may wane or flourish, I’m not quite in the mood [to recount his tale] just now” (1, II, 9; 6, XLIII, 1-4). Pushkin’s narrative distance is offset by great compassion for his heroes, and when he embarks on long digressions, his commentary is lighthearted and introspective rather than judgmental. These apparent differences between the two works negate the simple reading configuring *Eugene Onegin* as a derivative of *Don Juan*, but the question of how we can explain

the repeated Byronic allusions remains.

This problem necessitates us to distinguish between Byron's influence on *Eugene Onegin* as a narrative and Eugene Onegin as a character. Where *Eugene Onegin*, the novel, is in conversation with *Don Juan*, Eugene Onegin, the character, is clearly not emulating Byron's rather pitiful construction of Don Juan. However, as John Garrard recounts in his article, "Corresponding Heroines in 'Don Juan' and 'Eugenie Onegin,'" Pushkin, himself, was entirely dismissive of the notion of his narrative as an imitation of *Don Juan*. To this point, Garrard cites Pushkin's 1825 letter to Aleksandr Bestuzhev: "[*Don Juan*] has nothing in common with *Onegin*. You speak of the Englishman Byron's satire and compare it with mine, and demand that I write the same kind of satire! No, my dear friend, [...] There is not a hint of [satire] in *Onegin*" (429). Pushkin's indignant reaction towards this comparison reveals the extent to which *Eugene Onegin* can be understood as a defiant response to Byron's *Don Juan*. The poets offer contradictory arguments regarding the morality of the libertine, though they arrive at a consensus in sympathy for the 'playboy.' While the recurring mythological figure of Don Juan is, like Byron, "mad, bad, and dangerous to know," Byron's reconstruction of the mythical villain is "Silent and pensive, idle, restless, slow" (I, 87, 1; Introduction vii). Byron characterizes Don Juan in such a pathetic manner to cast blame onto scheming women and vindicate the libertine. Pushkin's novel, meanwhile, explains Eugene's apathetic and licentious behavior through a lack of purpose: a fault that stems from the inadequacy of humanity rather than malice. Though Pushkin portrays Eugene's misdeeds with candor, he does not villainize his hero. Instead, Eugene is construed as a foolish man without identity.

Byron's personal reputation as a philanderer deserves mention here, as the Byronic hero becomes synonymous with a libertine. While Pushkin's characters emulate literary characters, Byron seemed to have modeled his fiction on himself. The "Editor's note" in the Penguin edition of *Don Juan* attributes Byron's "impulse" to compose *Don Juan* to his "temperament, reading, personal circumstance, [...] past and present social environment, and what he thought and felt about them" (xxviii). In dissimulation, Byron attaches Juan's culpability to the charms of his seductresses, perhaps to absolve his public image. Eugene's characterization as a parody echoes what seems to be Pushkin's opinion of Byron; the narrator slyly implies that the poet, "hav[ing] penned / A mere self-portrait in the end," uses the fictitious world to revel in "hopeless egotism" (3, XII, 13; 1, LVI, 9-11). Eugene's proximity to the nefarious Byron critiques the poet's conflation of fictional and palpable moral systems.

Pushkin aligns Eugene with Byron to fracture the aloof, arrogant, and

impressive facade of his identity and demonstrate the instability of self-projection in reading. Initially, our eponymous hero has all the characteristics of the traditional ‘Don Juanian’ libertine. Eugene is an effortlessly suave seducer who boasts all the “wit and charm” of “[a] London dandy” and delights ladies with “free and easy conversation,” and like any successful philanderer, Eugene “seize[s] a moment’s weakness / To conquer youthful virtue’s meekness / Through force of passion and of sense” (1, IX, 7; X, 9; XI, 5-7). Even for all his success in the social circles of Petersburg, however, Eugene feels devoid of purpose. Continually discontent with his surroundings, Eugene “yawned alike where’er he sat, / In ancient hall or modern flat” (2, II, 13-14). Ironically, Eugene attempts to rectify the “emptiness that plagues his soul / By making his the thoughts of others,” and with his “bookshelf overflowing,” he reads to find himself (1, XLIV, 2-3, 5). These efforts prove to be unsuccessful, and for all his education, he cannot grasp poetry: “He never knew, [...] / A dactyl from an anapest” (1, VII, 3-4). Eugene finds faults in everything he reads, a fact that drives him to abandon his literary endeavors: “Some [books] raved or lied, and some were dense; / Some lacked all conscience; some, all sense” (1, XLIV, 7-8). However, when Tatyana later enters his library, we learn that Eugene, despite his disinterest in books, harbors an intense admiration of Byron, who writes “with power” (7, XXII, 6). Eugene, with “jaded” arrogance, excessive boredom, and a complete lack of concern for the needs of others, evidently sees himself in Byron’s “modern man” with “his immoral soul disclosed” (2, II, 12; 7, XXII, 8, 10). Eugene’s actions are a manifestation of the villainous hero: a feeble attempt to construct selfhood by a deficient and “frustrat[ed]” reader (1, XLIV, 6).

While Eugene represents the Byronic figure, Pushkin characterizes the love interest, Tatyana, through the vastly more virtuous moral system found in Sentimentalist literature. Like Eugene, Tatyana feels great discontent in her life and longs for something beyond her lived experience. She is “[b]ored by [other girls] noise” and “lack[s] the slightest predilection” for engaging in their conversation, so she “sit all day / In silence at the window bay” (2, XXVII, 13; XXV, 12-14). Unlike Eugene, however, she is “pensive, / shy, [...] and “apprehensive,” and thus finds solace in the “fictions and the fancies / Of Richardson and of Rousseau” (2, XXV, 5-6; 2, XXIX, 3-4). Pushkin aligns Tatyanna with this particular literary movement to demonstrate her tenderness, empathy, and high moral ideals. Indeed, such a portrait of her character is far more laudatory than Eugene’s “arid vanity exposed” in Byron, but Pushkin still warns against conflating one’s person with fantasy (7, XXII, 11). Instead of engaging with the world around her, Tatyana “[p]erceives herself as heroine— Some favourite author’s fond creation: / Clarissa, Julia, or Delphine” and languishes in Romance (3, X, 2-4). Tatyanna’s reading

obscures her love for Eugene. She projects herself on these heroines, “possessing / Another’s joy, another’s pain” instead of cultivating true feelings in her real life (3, X, 10-11). Her perfect image of “Onegin’s face” is “borrowed [from the] lovers” portrayed in the books she loves, and when she writes her love letter, the narrator reminds the reader it is this fictionalized image of Eugene that she has in mind: “For whom, Tatyana, is it meant?” (3, IX, 14; X, 5; XXI, 13-14). Furthermore, it is important to note that these heroines—Richardson’s Clarissa, Rousseau’s Julia, and Mme de Staël’s Delphine—all choose death and renounce their pursuer to maintain their virtuous ideals. But why does Pushkin specifically align Tatyana with these heroines who never reach a happy ending, rather than the many sentimentalist heroines rewarded with marriage and bliss? Of course, this narrative choice foreshadows Tatyana’s ultimate rejection of Eugene, but their fatality also underscores futility in such a rigid understanding of duty: “My dear one, you are doomed to perish” (3, XV, 5). Tatyana desires to be with “Grandison in Russian dress,” but she also holds herself to the unattainable moral standards of Clarissa, Julia, and Delphine (3, X, 14). Pushkin’s narrator believes this conflation of fiction and reality to be a grave mistake: “Tatyana, O my dear Tatyana! / [...] Relying on a tyrant’s honour, / You’ve now resigned to him your fate” (3, XV, 1-4).

Pushkin uses Tatyana’s letter, a format which echoes both the confessional epistolary used in Sentimentalist tradition and Julia’s touching letter in Byron’s *Don Juan*, to juxtapose Eugene and Tatyana’s contradicting worldviews. Despite the discrepancy in their circumstances, there are several striking similarities between Julia’s and Tatyana’s letters that elucidate Pushkin’s critique of Julia and Juan’s romance. Firstly, both letters are written in French rather than the women’s native languages, for Byron’s narrator mentions at an earlier point that “Julia thought / In French,” and Tatyana “turn[s] for love’s discussion / To French....” (I, 84, 7-8; 3, XXVI, 9-10). This point appears insignificant, but it shows the extent to which their identities are a performance. Tatyana’s romantic traits come from her idealization of Sentimentalist novels, while Julia exhibits Byron’s construction of feminine feelings. Secondly, both women declare in their letters that they will never love another man: Julia believes that this love is her “whole existence,” and Tatyana, likewise, writes emphatically: “Another! No! In all creation / There’s no one else whom I’d adore” (I, 194, 1-2; 3, TL, 31). However, while Julia seems to accept that Juan “will proceed in beauty, and in pride, / Beloved and loving many,” Tatyana believes that Eugene will feel a duty to her: “But if my hapless situation / Evokes some pity for my woe, / You won’t abandon me, I know” (I, 195, 1-2; 3, Tatyana’s Letter, 5-7). There is a substantial difference between each woman’s expectation of her lover here, corresponding to the contrast between Byronic and Sentimentalist moral systems.

Garrard argues that in these “few stanzas, as Julia writes her letter, Byron allows one of his characters to emerge from the narrator’s monologue and speak in her own voice”; however, this reading ignores the fact that Julia, as a love interest, behaves only according to Byron’s design (430-31). When Julia writes, “Man’s love is of man’s life a thing apart, / ’Tis woman’s whole existence,” she is not speaking in her own voice but adhering to the Byronic fantasy of what a woman should think (I, 194, 1-2). Tatyana, on the other hand, is not her author’s puppet, but she does hold herself to the Sentimentalist heroines’ moral standards.

Eugene’s response to the letter subverts his original characterization as a libertine, destabilizing the rigid dichotomy between fictional ideals. When Eugene rejects Tatyana, he cites his lack of “desire[] / To bind with family ties [his] life,” and this impulse seems to reflect his allegiance to the Byronic lifestyle (4, XIII, 1-2). However, the philandering Byronic hero would likely not care whether or not he is “worthy of [her virtues]” as Eugene does (4, XIV, 4). The narrator’s sympathetic reflection on the discrepancy between Eugene’s fictionalized self-image and his actions produces a reading of Eugene as a real person rather than a Byronic parody:

I know that you’ll agree, my reader,
That our good friend was only kind
And showed poor Tanya when he freed her
A noble heart and upright mind. (4, XVIII, 1-4)

For all his arrogance and boredom, Eugene cannot actually bring himself to take advantage of Tatyana. When confronted with Tatyana’s love, Eugene briefly changes from the “jealous swain” to a man of “noble heart” (1, IX, 2; 4, XVIII, 4). Further, in writing this letter, Tatyana also strays from her idealized self-concept—as the coy and virtuous Clarissa would never write such a bold proclamation of affection—and even Eugene urges her “[t]o exercise restraint and reason / [because] innocence can lead to woe.” (4, XVI, 12, 14). The way Tatyana and Eugene behave regarding this letter, the format of which is a composite of both characters’ literary tastes, destabilizes our expectation of how they will carry out the moral practices they idealize. Neither Eugene nor Tatyana can behave according to their fictional moral systems, and Pushkin uses this incongruence between fiction and reality to defamiliarize how literature influences lived experience.

Pushkin uses a second moral conflict between Eugene and Lensky to draw Eugene out of his fictionalized self-conception. Pushkin establishes a strong dichotomy between the two friends from the beginning: while Eugene is proud, callous, and “uncaring,” Lensky is of “noble heart, / [and] A spirit strange but full of fire” (2, VI, 11-12). The two friends with opposite perspectives “[find] everything a basis / For argument or food for thought,” and with such contradictory ideals, a

romantic rivalry seems only natural (2, XVI, 1-2). Pushkin aligns Lensky, “a handsome youth / And poet [...] / From misty Germany,” with the sensitivity and intense passion of heroes in the Sturm und Drang movement (2, VI, 7-9). Lensky reads “Goethe’s and [...] Schiller’s” works and “proudly [sings] with open heart / Sublime emotion’s every feature” which he sees in Olga’s face (2, IX, 8, 11-12). Ironically, Lensky is indubitably better suited as a romantic partner for the idealistic and dutiful Tatyana, who admires “Werther, [the] rebellious martyr,” than he is to Olga, who is flirtatious and “bor[ing]” (2, XXIII, 12; 3, IX, 9). These characters, however, are both so blinded by their fictional fantasies that they do not notice what exists in real life.

Eugene and Lensky’s duel becomes another platform to dramatize incongruous moral perspectives. In Eugene’s mind, so influenced by his idealization of the Byronic figure, his flirtation with Olga is just an “idl[e] jest,” but passionate Lensky, with “[a] perfect love of righteous ways,” is immediately “[c]onsumed with jealous indignation” (5, XLI, 6; 2, IX, 2; 5, XLIV, 11). The duel physically enacts the two men’s ideological conflict, and here again, Pushkin draws from two of the literary sources they emulate. In Goethe’s novel, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, the eponymous protagonist falls in love with a woman, Charlotte, who is betrothed to another man, Albert. After considering murdering Albert so that he be with her, “If Albert were to die?—Yes, she would become—and I should be,” Werther ultimately “resolve[s] to die” instead because he cannot endure the heartbreak or bear to kill the man who has caused it (103, 141). Lensky, emboldened by feverish jealousy, proposes a duel with Eugene. However, like Werther, when he is alone the night before the duel, the romantic poet seems to resign himself to death and writes, “I, perhaps, descend in sorrow / The secret refuge of the tomb.... / [...] Of me the world shall soon grow dumb” (6, XXII, 3-4). While Lensky is awake in anguish, Eugene, “that idle sinner / [...] sleep[s] soundly,” apparently unconcerned with the prospect of killing someone (6, XXIV, 1-2). Lensky, for all his heated feeling, essentially cannot bring himself to go through with the murder, and in the decisive moment, he “wait[s] / To close one eye and, only then, / To take his aim....” (6, XXX, 9-11). Lensky dies because he is committed to an unsustainable (German) Romantic ideal. He becomes paralyzed by two unviable impulses: to get revenge on Eugene and to maintain his honor. Lensky’s death symbolizes the infeasibility of the fictional ideal and becomes a prodigious turning point for Eugene because it confronts him with the painful reality of his actions. When Lensky falls, “Eugene, in sudden chill, despairs, / Runs to the stricken youth ... and stares! / Calls out his name!” (6, XXXI, 7-9). This real-life consequence destabilizes Eugene’s apathetic persona, and his inflated ego breaks apart. Even in this awful moment, Pushkin’s narrator is

sympathetic to his hero and asks the reader, “what would you ... inside / Be thinking of... or merely feeling?” (6, XXXIV, 8-9). This sympathy offers a reading of Eugene not as a malicious or apathetic villain but as a broken man searching for an identity in an ideal.

For all this conflict caused by the conflation of reality and fiction, it appears as though Pushkin construes the literary world as nothing but a false mirror that obscures our conception of reality. However, Pushkin reconstructs reading as a clarifying lens for Tatyana to better understand Eugene and herself. When she finds Eugene’s library and “read[s] the books he’d called his own,” she realizes that Eugene has constructed his entire persona around his reading of Byron:

What was he then? An imitation?

An empty phantom or a joke,

A Muscovite in Harold’s cloak,

Compendium of affectation,

A lexicon of words in vogue ...

Mere parody and just a rogue? (7, XX, 13-14; XXIV, 9-14)

Pushkin uses this scene to give Tatyana access to Eugene’s interior world, and she can finally understand “His cold, embittered mind that seems / To waste itself in empty schemes” (7, XXII, 13-13). Once she realizes Eugene is “an empty phantom,” his haughty ego is no longer impenetrable. Eugene’s vulnerability here invokes empathy not just in Tatyana but also on behalf of the reader. Moreover, Eugene’s false persona parallels Tatyana’s tendency to project herself into the fiction she reads. Indeed, Eugene’s sophisticated indifference is an act, but she has fallen in love with a fictional projection. It is only when faced with the truth of Eugene’s deceitful identity that Tatyana can recognize her own fantastical pretense. Pushkin portrays his characters in conflict to enact a literal juxtaposition of paragons, destabilizing the characters’ parodical self-conception. Pushkin’s defamiliarization of fictional value systems demonstrates how one cannot perfectly enact fiction in the real world; yet reading also becomes a means of clarification. When Pushkin introduces Tatyana to these “strange” books, she, with a skeptical eye, reads to understand Eugene’s perspective (7, XXI, 11). With this laborious and “slow” mode of critical reading, Tatyana is able to engage with an unfamiliar way of seeing the world (7, XXIV, 1). This new method of reading awakens Tatyana to the dangers of idealizing one’s life.

The beginning of the novel presents Eugene and Tatyana as idealists living in separate dogmatically defined textual worlds rather than a more nuanced reality, but, by the end, Tatyana has learned to be skeptical of reifying literary logic. When they meet again years later, Pushkin, with ruthless poetic irony, inverts their original positions. Eugene, “[a]nnoyed with leisure and inaction” and desperate for

“purpose,” now plays the “demented” sentimental, but Tatyana gives “him not the least attention, / No matter what he tries to do” (8, XXX, 1; XII, 12,14; XXXI, 1-2). When Eugene’s love letter gets no reply, he “turn[s] to books and sages” and reads “Gibbon and Rousseau; Chamfort, Manzoni, Herder’s pages; Madame de Staël, Bichat, Tissot” (8, XXXV, 1-4). Though he reads the Sentimentalist and *Sturm und Drang* novels so beloved by the people he has wronged, Eugene is no closer to grasping reality as he reads without any critical reflection: “His feelings and his thoughts went slack, / While in his mind Imagination / Dealt out her motley faro pack” (8, XXXVII, 2-4). Incapable of seeing beyond himself and his immediate desires, Eugene again projects fiction onto life. When he confronts Tatyana, she admonishes his “offensive show of passion,” which comes too late to ignite her former “girlish dreams” (8, XXXVII, 2-4; XLV, 10). Tatyana’s rejection of Eugene represents a final disavowal of the reification of abstract ideals. When Tatyana leaves him, Pushkin’s narrator ends Eugene’s story and turns back to a ‘meta-criticism’ of readerly engagement: “Whatever, reader, your reaction, / [...] Whatever end / You may have sought in these reflections— / [...] You’ve found at least a crumb or two” (8, XLIX, 1, 4-5, 13). The narrator’s interjection here reminds us that critical reading is the best means of finding truth. After all, it is reading that allows Tatyana to overcome her innocent fantasies.

The act of reading becomes essential in understanding how Pushkin configures morality. Eugene is not a malevolent villain but a man who cannot abandon his fictionalized self-concept. Pushkin juxtaposes these recognizable fictitious ideals to destabilize the reader’s notion of a coherent or fixed moral system in the real world. Byron’s narrator in *Don Juan* configures this lack of “certainty” in “Mortality’s conditions” as an irrefutable constraint: “I doubt if doubt itself be doubting,” but Pushkin implies that critical engagement with the moral logic of the literary world grants us access to greater truth (IX, 17, 5-6, 8).¹ Byron uses this “doubt” in moral contiguity to satirize the concept of ethical duty and implicitly vindicate his libertine. Pushkin’s narrator meanwhile depicts these foibles of greed and cruelty with great compassion: “We all take on Napoleon’s features, / And millions of our fellow creatures / Are nothing more to us than tools ... ” (2, XIV, 5-7). Pushkin invokes sympathy for the libertine by representing his poorly constructed self-concept as a universal human foible. The narrator does not define characters in terms of goodness or wickedness but portrays each of them with irrevocable sympathy. By aligning his characters with literary works, Pushkin both demonstrates the fragility of an idealized self-concept and implies that critical reading can rectify self-abstraction. Pushkin uses intertextuality to defamiliarize our understanding of what literature can achieve. By decontextualizing our pre-existing notions of ethical duty,

ZAVITZ

vliterature allows critical readers to understand new perspectives. Through his intertextual juxtaposition of moral systems, Pushkin promotes a simple yet quintessential idea: critical engagement with literature allows readers to extend their empathy beyond themselves.

WORKS CITED

Byron, Byron George Gordon, et al. *Don Juan*. Penguin Books, 2013.

Cervantes Saavedra, Miguel de, trans. Samuel Putnam. *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote De La Mancha*. The Catharijne Press, 2001.

Garrard, John. "Corresponding Heroines in 'Don Juan' and 'Evgenii Onegin.'" *The Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 73, no. 3, 1995, pp. 428–48. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4211859>. Accessed 27 Apr. 2023.

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang, trans. Boylan, R.D. Boylan. *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. Project Gutenberg, 2009.

Pushkin, Aleksandr Sergeevich, trans. James E. Falen. *Eugene Onegin: A Novel in Verse*. Oxford University Press, 2009.

Shklovsky, Viktor, trans. Sher, Benjamin. "Art as Device." *Theory of Prose*. Dalkey Archive Press, 1990, pp. 1-14. Internet Archive. https://archive.org/details/isbn_9780916583644/page/14/mode/2up. Accessed 1 May 2023.

Phantom Past, Pure Future: Colonial Hauntings and Temporal Disruption in *Jane Eyre*

by Qian Xun Tie

While a linear reading of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* unfolds within the temporal and geographical confines of Great Britain, a post-colonial lens unveils the looming presence of its colonies. Much scholarly attention, notably Susan Meyer's "Colonialism and the Figurative Strategy of *Jane Eyre*," has been directed towards the analysis of Rochester's West Indian wife Bertha Mason, whose racialization becomes a conduit for the spectral intrusion of British colonialism into the novel. It is crucial to note, however, that in conjunction with her proximity to blackness, Brontë writes Bertha as a paranormal entity, a phantom presence that haunts Thornfield Hall and its residents. I endeavour to reconcile these dual images by investigating the theme of the supernatural through Jacques Derrida's theory of hauntology. By way of synthesis, I argue that memories of colonial trauma haunt the domestic spaces of *Jane Eyre* and subsequently disrupt the linear trajectory of Britain's national history. As such, a central predicament of the novel revolves around the means to purge both its characters and their dwellings of the racialized other to restore a pure and untainted British past in order to transition into an untroubled future.

In "Colonialism and the Figurative Strategy of *Jane Eyre*," Susan Meyer illuminates the racial ambiguity and fluidity of Bertha. In Rochester's retrospective account, Bertha is "a fine woman...tall, dark, and majestic" (Meyer 252, Brontë 260). As the daughter of a Creole, it remains unclear whether Bertha is as white-passing as her brother Richard. Nevertheless, Rochester notes that "her family wished to secure me, because I was of a good race," suggesting his closer proximity to whiteness (Brontë 260). Yet, as Bertha descends into madness and is imprisoned by Rochester, Brontë's descriptions of the character become more explicitly aligned

with blackness. Jane, attempting to describe Bertha's physicality prior to her wedding, tells Rochester: "Fearful and ghastly to me...It was a discoloured face—it was a savage face. I wish I could forget the roll of the red eyes and the fearful blackened inflation of the lineaments!" (242). She then details Bertha's skin as "purple" and her lips as "swelled and dark" (242). As Bertha's subjugation in Thornfield Hall heightens in severity and she is physically chained to its third floor for ten years, her features—her face, skin, and lips—are coloured by colonial images of a racialized other. The stereotyped diction of blackness used to describe her physicality, especially with the word choice of "savage," likens her less to an heiress of West Indian fortune and more to a slave (242). To this degree, Bertha's racial identity, beginning from ambiguity and eventually reaching full blackness, is fluid.

Brontë's distinctive approach to racializing Bertha Mason reveals that she does not merely intend for Mason to represent individual oppression but also the collective oppression of many, including those subjected to slavery under British imperialism. As Meyer points out, Brontë progressively heightens Bertha's darkness as she is increasingly oppressed in the hands of Rochester—an imperialist—and increasingly confined within Thornfield Hall—an estate built off colonial wealth—to the extent that her identity expands to embody the figure of the West Indian slave (Meyer 255). Indeed, throughout *Jane Eyre*, Brontë often steers the personal into the political by appealing not to individual bondage, but a collective one. The protagonist, for instance, declares that "Millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine, and millions are in silent revolt against their lot" (Brontë 93). Here, Brontë explicitly describes oppression as a shared condition rather than an isolated one. As Jane contemplates those who are "condemned to a stiller doom than [her's]" and utilizes the diction of "revolt," her reader is immediately reminded of the circumstances of Bertha (93). However, through the usage of numerical quantifiers, Brontë elicits not only the terror of a woman gone mad, but also the oppression of a collective, untethered, and revolting other across the sea. With the growing number of slave uprisings and the emancipation of the West Indies in 1838, the imagery of revolution points to a growing national anxiety surrounding Britain's political realities (Meyer 254).

While Meyer's essay gestures toward the historic underpinnings of Bertha's heightened blackness, I contend that, in addition to political unease, the evocation of the supernatural gives the novel a spiritual tilt (Meyer 254). Throughout *Jane Eyre*, Brontë not only portrays Bertha as a slave, but also a ghost who haunts Thornfield Hall. Just as her skin darkens after years of imprisonment, Bertha becomes increasingly ghostly: her laugh "demoniac," her abode a "goblin's cell" (Brontë 126, 264). In fact, images of blackness and ghostliness are often intertwined. Jane's initial description of Bertha, for instance, refers simultaneously to

her “discoloured” face and the “roll of the red eyes” (242). By intentionally placing racialized and paranormal language within the same descriptor, Brontë creates a character that is simultaneously and equally “savage” and “ghastly” (242). Just as Jane’s reference to the “millions [...] condemned to a stiller doom” extends beyond hyperbole, the evocation of the supernatural holds deeper significance than mere metaphor (93). Bertha, in this way, is otherworldly not only by her West Indian origins but also by her spectral status.

In Jacques Derrida’s *Specters of Marx*, he posits the ghost as an expression of due justice. “No justice,” he writes, “seems possible or thinkable without the principle of some responsibility, beyond all living present [...] before the ghosts of those who are not yet born or who are already dead” (Derrida xviii). For Derrida, the past is not a static entity. The victims of colonialism and capitalist imperialism, despite their erasure, continue to influence and “haunt” the present. Elements of the past, which may be repressed or overlooked, persist as immaterial spectral traces. Hauntological politics, then, trouble the post in the Western postcolonial paradigm, envisaging the co-existence of the past and the present. A forward-facing national history, in this sense, is unsettled by the guilt of British colonialism; collective memories of trauma and unresolved crimes transcend linear temporality in the form of the supernatural. By adopting the figure of the ghost and appealing to the supernatural in conjunction with race, Brontë indicates that despite the emancipation of the West Indies at the time of writing *Jane Eyre*, the tinge of injustice nevertheless lingers.

Indeed, ghostly spirits of the colonized, embodied but not confined to Bertha, engender the domestic spaces of *Jane Eyre*’s England. Observing Thornfield Hall, Jane wonders “what crime...lived incarnate in this sequestered mansion, and could neither be expelled nor subdued by the owner?” (Brontë 179). Here, Brontë attributes Thornfield’s hauntings to the “crime” of its owner. Rochester, who lived in pre-emancipation Jamaica for four years as an esteemed white man, certainly owned slaves in the New World (Meyers 259). The house, acquired from his West Indian fortune, is then a direct product of slave labour. Hence, the past crime Jane refers to here is the crime of colonialism, performed by and haunting its imperialist owner.

Unable to be purged, the memory of colonialism accumulates within the mansion, layering the past into the present. Bertha’s attic, the source of Thornfield’s supernatural stirrings, is described as a “shrine of memory” that, “if there were a ghost...Thornfield Hall...would be its haunt” (Brontë 90). In this case, Brontë evokes a historical past that, read in the light of Bertha’s representation of slavery, gestures to a troubled present. The floor, with “wrought old-English hangings crusted with thick work” that portray effigies of an exotic land—“strange flowers, and stranger

birds, and strangest human beings”—and elucidated by the “pallid gleam of the moonlight,” suggests a tainted English past that is illuminated through spectral shining (Brontë 90). Here, Brontë juxtaposes the familiar with the foreign, the pre-colonial with the post-colonial—the traditional English decor and the uncanny flora, fauna, and people, presumably collected from the West Indies. Through colonial contact, Englishness—its pure and stainless “tradition”—has also been imbued with the eerie and alien phantom of the other (90). ‘Crusted’ on its hangings, the presence of the colonized freezes Great Britain into a state of immobility: both from returning to an untainted past and progressing cleanly into the future.

In this sense, time itself—as conceptualized as a forward-flowing notion—is disrupted by the novel’s colonial hauntings. Clearly, with the dual narration and existence of both young Jane and older Jane, Brontë already utilizes the form of the novel to evoke a sense of coexistence, as the present speaks to the past. The careful reader then can readily assume that Brontë does not structure *Jane Eyre* in a strictly linear manner, with a distinctive past, present, and future. Yet, in the case of colonialism, the past as existing in the present hinders a shift into the future. As Thornfield Hall continues to be permeated by the slave spirit of Bertha Mason, its residents are not only tormented by fear but barred from advancing through time. Rochester and Jane’s inability to marry exemplifies how a colonial past troubles temporality. As a female bildungsroman, *Jane Eyre* traces the growth of its protagonist through time, beginning from childhood and ending in marriage. However, Jane’s journey through time—her past as a girl and future as a woman—are distinguished not by age but via a rite of passage. Socially organized time, in the words of queer theorist Judith Halberstam, references “conventional forward-moving narratives of birth, marriage, reproduction, and death” (Halberstam 314). The bildungsroman cannot end without a journey through time, and Jane cannot progress through time without a celebratory marriage. Thus, the inability of Jane to marry Rochester also means she cannot come of age. This immobilization is caused precisely by the haunting presence of Bertha. Due to his marriage to Bertha from his past in Jamaica, Rochester and Jane cannot legally marry. Although Rochester attempts to hide his crime and escape into an untarnished future by locking Bertha away and wedding Jane, the couple nevertheless cannot escape the haunting of his imperialist history and, as a result, remain suspended in time.

Ergo, a central predicament of *Jane Eyre* revolves around the struggle to remove the presence of the past as a means for both its protagonist and the tainted Britain to restore the forward-facing flow of temporality. For Jane, the presence of the dark Bertha means having to become Rochester’s mistress, preventing her from properly traversing through time by passing the stage of marriage. Considering this possibility, she wonders “whether it is better...to be a slave in a fool’s paradise at Marseilles...or to

be a village schoolmistress, free and honest, in a breezy mountain nook in the healthy heart of England?" (Brontë 306). On one hand, as Meyers elucidates, Brontë's lexicon of slavery accords both her protagonist and her audience an, albeit questionable, vocabulary to describe female oppression (Meyers 250). Curiously, however, the author also introduces France as the "fevered" slave-owning nation and England as "free and honest," again expanding the personal oppression of Jane into a representation of the national conundrum of post-colonial English identity (Brontë 306).

As Brontë makes clear that colonialism is not simply a national transgression but a continental one, she simultaneously poses France's colonial activity as an instrument to reinstate a broken nationhood. Reestablished by Napoleon in 1802, slavery was legal and practiced in the French colonies until 1848: a year after the publication of *Jane Eyre* (Chatman 145). Therefore, although the two nations share the crime of colonialism, Brontë distinguishes Great Britain as less culpable on account of its earlier abolition of slavery by fourteen years (McPherson 28). It is evident, then, that despite the history of colonialism that haunts her characters and their abodes, Brontë nevertheless desires to absolve her nation's guilt (Brontë 306). Yet, the only way of doing so according to the novel's narrative logic is to remove the presence of the racialized other, just as Bertha's removal allows Jane and Rochester to move forward with their lives.

Jane Eyre ends with a restoration of linear time for its characters and England's national history, with this restoration facilitated by the punishment of the imperialist Rochester and a reckoning with the past via religious exoneration. As Jane chooses to leave Rochester and Thornfield due to the discovery of Bertha, she turns to God, thanking his "providence for the guidance" (307). Additionally, when Thornfield Hall, the very source of colonial hauntings, burns down, Brontë frames the incident as God's will. Rochester himself appeals to the religious as he recounts the fire: "Divine justice pursued its course; disasters came thick on me...I began to experience remorse, repentance." (380). Here, the injustice of colonialism is served: the imperialist is punished for his crime by the destructive purge of fire. If the memory of the colonized is concentrated in the supernatural—the demonic Bertha—then the holy fire of God offers a direct counter to her haunting. As the supernatural is purged from Thornfield, the novel's dilemma is resolved. Indeed, there is no trace, no more mention of spirits, ghosts, or the paranormal in the novel's ending chapter. Dead, Bertha no longer hinders the legal wedlock of Jane and Rochester. Linear time, in this way, is restored; the past is cleansed from the present. The novel ends with Jane moving successfully from girlhood into womanhood, into the "marriage and reproduction" phase of her life (Halberstam 314). The imperialist, vindicated from his past, is reborn and free to move past his painful atonement.

TIE

Rochester, though for some time punished with blindness, experiences the restoration of his sight, as he follows Jane in turning to God. This rejuvenation ultimately leads to reproduction—a son that inherits “his own eyes, as they once were—large, brilliant, and black” (Brontë 385). Evoking natality and a second birth, Brontë shows that the colonial sin can be absolved through God’s “mercy,” and suggests that Great Britain can move into its future untainted by its past (Brontë 385).

While the memory of colonialism, realized through the supernatural, is used to disturb the temporality of the characters and England itself, a pivot towards religion ultimately purges its presence. The past, expelled by divine justice, is indeed bygone. Nonetheless, the reader is left to wonder whether it is truly possible to wash away the tinge and trauma of colonialism. The removal of colonial memory in *Thornfield* opens the door for Jane’s coming-of-age and Rochester’s rebirth, while Bertha remains dead. As I have argued, it is precisely her death that gives way for the protagonist’s happy ending. Yet, for Bertha, the novel nevertheless ends in tragedy. If the reader accepts that Bertha represents the memory of British colonialism, they must also reckon with the great unease of what the expulsion of her spirit implies—what the expulsion of a colonial history means for the millions that have suffered, and as Derrida indicates, continue to suffer from its rule. Though the future of England is clear at the end of *Jane Eyre*, the same cannot be said about its ex-colonies.

WORKS CITED

Brontë Charlotte, and Richard J Dunn. *Jane Eyre: An Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism*. 3rd ed., Norton, 2001.

Chatman, Samuel L. “‘There Are No Slaves in France’: A Re-Examination of Slave Laws in Eighteenth Century France.” *The Journal of Negro History*, vol. 85, no. 3, 2000, pp. 144–53. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2649071>. Accessed 14 Nov. 2023.

Derrida, Jacques, and Peggy Kamuf. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*. Routledge, 2006.

Halberstam, Judith. “What’s That Smell? Queer Temporalities and Subcultural Lives.” *International Journal of Cultural Studies* vol. 6 no. 3, 2003, pp. 313-333.

TIE

McPherson, James M. "Was West Indian Emancipation a Success? The Abolitionist Argument during the American Civil War." *Caribbean Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1964, pp. 28–34. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25611815>. Accessed 14 Nov. 2023.

Meyer, Susan L. "Colonialism and the Figurative Strategy of 'Jane Eyre.'" *Victorian Studies*, vol. 33, no. 2, 1990, pp. 247–68. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3828358>. Accessed 18 Nov. 2023.

Cooperative Creation in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*

by *Natasha Kinne*

Since Milton's *Paradise Lost* is an adaptation of the Bible's book of *Genesis*, its plot inherently involves God's creation of Adam and Eve. Unlike in the biblical *Genesis*, however, Milton elaborates upon the creation story with subsidiary examples of invention, including that of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden—thereby demonstrating that creativity is an equally human endeavor. He also emphasizes the complementary relationship between God and Christ (the Son), in which these two divine figures delegate the tasks of visionary and executor in a collaborative creative project. Contrastingly, Milton endows Satan and his demonic crew with creativity in a parodic vein. Unlike the generative and productive creativity of God and Adam and Eve, though, creativity of Satanic figures bolsters a fallen, chaotic world where creativity is not cooperative. Through Satan, Sin, and Death, Milton contrasts hellish invention, which is individualistic, with divine creativity, which is cooperative. The failure of Satanic invention lies in its absorption, while the success of heavenly creation lies in its collaborative nature.

The relationship between the Father and Son demonstrates the cooperation of creator and creation in heaven. The Son (Christ) calls the father “Judg / Of all things made, and judgest onely right” (3.154-155), and through this weighty statement, recognizes the unmatched potency of God's power in relation to his own. Instead of detesting God's supremacy as Satan does (4.50-51), Christ embraces his secondary position to God by “attend[ing] the will / Of his great Father” and by seeking his Father's approval of his plans (3.270-71). The Son accesses his power through submission to the Father. In response to his Son's devotion to a non-selfish relationship with God, the Father calls Christ “alone / [the Father's] word, wisdom, and effectual might” (3.170). Though the Father does not give his Son with equal

KINNE

power to himself, he acknowledges his Son's special, indispensable role. The father establishes himself as the holder of power and Christ as his inspiration; he erects a collaborative relationship between Father and Son.

The Father and the Son demonstrate a distinctly collaborative thinker-doer relationship through their plan to save mankind. In response to the Father's request for one of his Heavenly subjects to "be mortal to redeem / Mans mortal crime" (3.214-215), the Son entreats his Father to "Account [the Son] man" (3.227). Though the scheme to save mankind is originally the Father's, the Son enacts man's salvation by volunteering for the task. This initial stage in the plan establishes the Father as the thinker and the son as the doer. The pair's creative dynamic rejects authoritarian and individual creativity in favor of collaboration. It is this combined dedication to a sole effort that distinguishes the Father and Son from Satan, who selfishly claims all creative ability for himself. Without the Son's action, God's plan to redeem mankind could not be carried out.

These thinker-doer roles are reversed, however, when the Son advances the scheme by proclaiming his future. The Son declares that his Father will "not leave [the Son] in the loathsome grave" after he has sacrificed himself for mankind (3.247), an assertion to which the father agrees (3.313-315). Milton portrays the Son's resurrection as a collaborative project which the Father actualizes through his power. The Father reinforces the son's divine and creative capacity through the creation of the earth by "perform[ing]" what the son "speak[s]" (7.164). By giving the Son creative authority the Father erects a power dynamic in which both the Father and the Son are necessary. Through this dynamic, the Father and Son, "redeeme" man from "Hellish hate" (3.300). The Father and Son achieve the ultimate triumph over Hell, which is reclaiming mankind, only through their cooperative efforts. The Son's active role in achieving mankind's salvation is fundamental to its success—no other angels volunteer to save the world. The collaborative relationship between Father and Son allows the pair to fulfill varying roles in creation to bring about the best effect.

The Father also cooperates with Adam and Eve by granting them some creative license in maintaining the garden of Eden. When he creates the world, God proclaims that humankind will "acknowledge whence his good / Descends" (7.512-13) and "adore / And worship God Supream" (7.514-15). Since the Father demands praise from Adam and Eve for his almighty power, the Father's creativity initially seems self-interested. God alters this image by endowing Adam and Eve with creativity in exchange for their adoration, thus forming a mutually beneficial relationship. By declaring that humankind should "fill the Earth" (7.534) and to "Till and keep" (8.320) the garden of Eden, God grants Adam and Eve an active, creative role in their lives. The Father invites Adam's and Eve's cooperation in fulfilling his will instead of coercing them through fear or brute strength.

KINNE

Though Adam and Eve betray God by eating from the tree of knowledge, Adam's and Eve's free will to repent combined God's accessibility through prayer restores a cooperative balance between the two parties (11.61-71). God's cooperation with humankind—despite his far superior power and goodness—implies the indispensability of cooperation to heavenly creation.

Adam's and Eve's creative role within Eden also exemplifies cooperative creation. In exchange for their residence in Paradise, God employs man in tending the garden of Eden (4.420-25). Adam and Eve “prune [the] growing Plants, and tend [the] Flours” (4.438) for their own stimulation and for the wellbeing of the garden; the relationship is reciprocal. Though Adam and Eve did not create Eden, they maintain the garden's beauty and prevent “wanton growth” in the plants (4.629): their creative instincts shape the garden's appearance. In exchange for their labors, the garden affords Adam and Eve with “delicious fruit” (4.422). Adam and Eve's generative creative powers extract the generative creation of the garden. Thus, the Father's cooperative relationship with Adam and Eve gives them a basis on which to form harmonious relationships with other living creatures and embody God's will.

God's symbiotic relationship with Adam and Eve facilitates their reconciliation after the fall. Adam actively pursues a return to their collaborative relationship as he suggests that he and Eve beg for pardon for their sins, with the hope that God might teach them how to cope with their fallen condition (10.1060-70, 1111). Adam realizes that he must work with God for his own preservation; he cannot take unilateral control over his life through denial of his fault or by killing himself as Eve suggests: he and Eve must ask for God's forgiveness to redeem themselves and return to a relationship of symbiotic creativity. In response to Adam and Eve's supplication, the Father lets Adam and Eve live on earth “though sorrowing, yet in peace” (11.117). Though God banishes Adam and Eve from Eden, he “intermix[es] / [his] Cov'nant in ...[Eve's] seed” and thereby resumes a cooperative relationship with Adam and Eve. Though free will allows Adam and Eve to betray cooperation with God by eating from the tree of knowledge, their concerted efforts to seek God's forgiveness and return to their state of collaboration helps to reconcile their relationship with God. Adam's and Eve's desire to be forgiven and the Father's willingness to forgive preserves God's creation and allows Adam and Eve to continue creating on earth.

Through his self-contained creativity, Satan embodies a parodic version of heavenly cooperation. Upon creating the palace Pandemonium in Hell the fallen angels assemble to discuss their next course of action. Milton first distinguishes Satan's creativity from God's creativity through the arrangement of the meeting hall. In heaven, the Father sits “High Thron'd about all heighth” with his “onely Son” on “his right” (3.558, 62, 63). Though God is elevated above his heavenly subjects,

Christ sits on his level and thus holds the same ranking. In Pandemonium, Satan sits in solitude “High on a Throne of Royal State” (2.1). Even Satan’s closest colleague, Beelzebub, sits below Satan in the court (2.299-300). The governments of heaven and hell are parallel in that the leader is raised above their followers; what differentiates them is that Satan does not share his power. Since the devils Moloch, Belial, and Beelzebub give speeches during the assembly, Satan gives the impression of leading (2.19) a “Royal State” (2.1) with some democratic principles. The narration provides, however, that these democratic principles are a false pretension. After Beelzebub wins popular approval through his suggestion that the devils “waste [the Father’s] new creation”, man, the narrator reveals that Beelzebub’s speech was “first devis’d / By *Satan*”, who is “the Author of all ill” (2.379-280, 281). Though the fallen angels approve of Satan’s scheme (2.387), they have no agency in determining their actions; Satan indoctrinates the devils instead of inspiring them through his creativity. Satan’s success depends solely on his unique, solitary capability, whereas the success of the Father and the Son is bolstered by their combined powers.

Satan also demonstrates his individualistic creativity through his limited communication with both his conspirators. God discusses the fate of Adam and Eve after their fall with his Son, who makes concessions for mankind. God is so inclined to his Son’s advice to “reconcile” with mankind that he heeds his “request for Man” (11.39, 46). Through his conversations with the Son, the Father demonstrates his cooperative decision-making tendencies and his capacity for changing his mind. Unlike God, Satan only converses with himself. Filled with “*Disdain*”, Satan convinces himself after his fall that if he “could repent” for his sins, he would only “heavier fall” from God’s grace (4.82, 93, 101). Satan does not consult God nor the other devils to confirm his belief; he simply resolves that God will not forgive him (4.104-105). Unlike the Father, who hears perspectives other than his own, Satan reinforces his will through his own influence; he avoids change of heart or mind. Through such instances of soliloquy, Satan mocks heavenly and human discourse by reserving conversation for himself. He is therefore excluded from enlightenment by creative alternatives to his fate.

Unlike the Son, who acknowledges his indebtedness to his creator, Satan considers himself his own creation. Raphael relates to Adam how Satan raised his revolutionary army in heaven. Satan attempted to dissolve the angels’ devotion to their maker by asserting that they were “self-begot” and “self-rais’d / By [their] own quick’ning power” (5.860-61). Contrary to Eve’s creation, God’s scheme to save mankind, and human procreation, Satan believes that he was formed without cooperation. The birth of Sin might suggest that he is right. Sin reminds Satan that she was born “Out of [his] head,” generated by Satan’s “bold conspiracy against

KINNE

Heav'ns King" (2.751). This claim reasserts Satan's vision of self-generation, apart from God's will. This self-contained procreation prevents the augmenting line of cooperation that God's creations form. Satan and hell are restricted to Satan's creativity instead of benefitting from an ever-growing league of creative forces. The fruition of cooperation is what distinguishes heavenly and hellish creation.

Though Satan parodies God's cooperative creation, his individualist behavior and beliefs prevent him from accessing the fertility of heavenly creation. While God shares his power with his Son and extends creative agency to humankind, Satan reserves all power for himself—limiting his own creative potential in doing so. Cooperation exposes its participants to different perspectives and can aid reconciliation between divided parties. If Satan had asked God for forgiveness and sought reconciliation with his creator, it is possible that Satan would have been saved, and his creative powers augmented through cooperation with God. Because of Satan's insistence upon individualistic creativity; however, he is doomed to carry out his misguided will in undisturbed creative solitude, closed off to the potential benefits of the views and capabilities of others. Instead, humans should reinforce their relationship with God by cooperating with others to resolve problems and produce a prosperous future.

WORKS CITED

Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*. Edited by Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007.



Awake
Natalie Chang

Socrates' Hamartia: A Derridean Analysis Of Logocentric Fallacies in Plato's *Apology*

by Flora Situ

For we have omitted the master-name of the supplementary series: death. Or rather, for death is nothing, the relationship to death, the anguished anticipation of death.

—Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 183.

Such is the primary accusation made towards the great Greek philosopher Socrates during his final trial: “Socrates is guilty of wrongdoing in that he busies himself studying things in the sky and below the earth; he makes the worse into the stronger argument, and he teaches these same things to others” (*Apology*, 19b). Plato's *Apology* is a text that directly goes against the traditions of Western thought in so far as Socrates demonstrates, through his public defense, the metaphysicality of presence that remains the foundation of his alleged crimes against the people of Athens. Socrates argues that the allegations against him derive from a misunderstanding of human wisdom, in as much as they presume the individual as capable of possessing knowledge as such. He famously negates knowledge (as much as it can be understood by the individual) as material *presence*—by which I mean that it concretely exists in, say, thought—and, instead, illustrates it to be an intrinsic *absence*, claiming thereby that his wisdom is a direct result of the lack thereof (21d). His argument presents an antinomy that reveals the contingency behind the process of meaning-making: Socrates' wisdom is a ‘nothing,’ as it were, in so far as he claims to not know anything; however, by being conscious of this non-wisdom, his comprehension of this fact becomes a form of knowledge that he can possess. Human knowledge, then, has the ability to be ‘nothing’ and ‘something’ simultaneously.

SITU

This radical affirmation of negation destabilizes the structure of language—and, subsequently, one’s system of thought—which allows for Socrates to defer his accusations by disavowing a normative centering point in his language. By presenting himself and his diction as both *lacking*, Socrates escapes the conventional dialectic of accused-accuser in a court of law, engaging in what Jacques Derrida refers to as *free play*¹ in his deconstruction of the self, knowledge, and, ultimately, death (“Structure, Sign, and Play,” 278).² Socrates’ employment of a language that is apparently sans-*λόγος* [*logos*] allows him to produce an effective argument against his accusers by imploring a new kind of justice, one that reaches beyond the standard binaries produced by the law. Socrates’ fatal flaw in his defense remains his invocation of the gods, notably the Oracle at Delphi, as the representation of an objective source of truth. He ironically contradicts the inherent instability in the process of signification that he had previously proven by centering his diction around the word of the gods, which expresses itself in his use of binaries during his cross-examination. I contend, then, in this paper, that Socrates bases his defense on the process of deconstruction, which is why his argument ultimately fails once he falls into the trap of logocentrism.

The Socratic paradox in this apology is an argument that is produced through Socrates’ negation of the language that he is employing. Conventionally, when faced with their accusations, the accused is meant to express “lamentations and tears” in the face of the law as a means to convince the jurymen of their supposed innocence (*Apology*, 38d). Socrates does not simply refuse to enter this formulaic dialogue, but instead insists that he is *unable* to do so. He confesses to a deficiency in his knowledge vis-à-vis regular courtly affairs, which renders him “simply a stranger” to the normative relation between an accused individual and their accusers—put otherwise, he does not possess the ability to employ a system of language which has, as its center, the law (17d). The first matter to be addressed, before we truly delve into the problematic of Socrates’ language, is the term around which this paper revolves: the center. Derrida famously draws on Ferdinand de Saussure’s rejection of the Adamic language in order to demonstrate that language is not a nomenclature, but rather a structured system of conventional *signs*. The process of signification, then, operates on the difference constitutive of the relationship between *signifieds*, which are possible concepts, and their *signifiers*, which are their sound-images (Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 11-13). Signification stems from the relationship between *absence* and *presence* in language: language predominantly exists in instability and absence in so far as there is no intrinsic and established structure in meaning-making. Therefore, absent signifieds are free to adhere to the Derridean ‘play,’ a process in which they can align themselves, in multiplicity, with any

SITU

possible signifier.

Words—material signs—are produced when language begins to structure itself around a centering point in signification. Through the establishment of this center, the signifier of a concept is forcefully brought into *being*—otherwise referred to as presence—from a violent and ongoing suppression of all other possible signifieds (Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 279-280). Any type of centering element in language is a “point of presence” that Derrida (and this paper) refers to as the *λόγος*, which effectively restricts the process of ‘play’ by disabling the signifier from attaching itself to any potential signifieds other than the one concept that it has appointed to it (*Of Grammatology*, 12). The existence of this *λόγος* causes language to become ‘logocentric,’ which Derrida defines as a hierarchical placement of some words over others: the production of binaries, in other words. Logocentrism remains the locus of the “history of metaphysics,” in which one is led to dismiss the absent signifieds behind the production of a sign and determine a material signifier as having intrinsic meaning merely by virtue of its *presence* (*Writing and Difference*, 279). That said, the act of repression ultimately produces a fundamental lack in the system of language, which itself produces an *unfulfilled desire* for its natural state: free ‘play.’ This desire manifests itself through the ontological haunting³ of all other potential signifieds in the material signifier. Signs will thereby always possess the trace of absent signifieds that could have potentially slid into a specific signifier and, because of these traces, the signifier can never truly embody the signified in its totality (Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 23).

In the context of the language commonly used in the courtroom, the linguistic *λόγος* remains that of Athenian law; all diction is under the domain of the law—which most would refer to as justice—through which the speaker is required to be produced as an accused subject by entering a conventional courtly dialogical formula in which they are required to plead their case before the men of Athens. This logocentric language is one that Socrates is not capable of using, and he therefore resorts to a means of speaking that he is most familiar with—his native tongue, so to speak—which is a dominantly-conversational argumentative dialogue between a multitude of individuals, produced by a series of questions and answers, otherwise known as the Socratic method. By using a different tongue than that of the normative courtroom discourse, Socrates’ language presents itself as a space of lack that exists beyond the expectations of the law as a “stranger” (*Apology*, 17d). Through his inability to enter the normative dialogue in the courtroom, Socrates demonstrates that this lack he refers to in his own tongue, then, is the *absence* of a *λόγος*. It is only by openly asserting what he lacks that Socrates enters a means of speaking that is effectively *sans-λόγος*, and he posits that it is only through this kind

SITU

of language that he can articulate “the whole truth” (17c). That is because this linguistic deficit synthesized with the aforesaid inherent instability of both language and meaning-making reveals that the process of signification is entirely contingent and thereby constantly subjected to change. This demonstrates that the *λόγος* is merely a *metaphysics* of presence in so far as it does not truly and naturally *exist*. Accordingly, the reified concepts from which the accusations against Socrates’ are based are thereby also subject to unreliability.

Socrates uses the signifier’s inability to embody, in totality, its signified to his own advantage by deconstructing the conventional definition of knowledge in order to contest the first of his allegations. Meletus’ accusation that Socrates studies and teaches cleverly constructed yet fallacious arguments paints him out to be a sophist. Socrates contends, as a response to Meletus, that his accusations cannot be true; he demonstrates the falsity in this claim by once more asserting himself as intrinsically lacking and by positing that he does not, in fact, know *anything*: “Certainly I would pride and preen myself if I had this knowledge, but I do not have it, gentlemen” (20c). This acknowledgement of a lack of knowledge demonstrates that his knowledge is founded on a void—a nothingness; and it is precisely because of Socrates’ understanding of this that the God at Delphi is able to proclaim him the wisest of men (21d). This then begs the question: how can one claim to be wise while simultaneously admitting to being entirely ignorant? Socrates himself unpacks this by recounting his interactions with other people who were considered to be wise:

Then, when I examined this [reputed wise] [...] my experience was something like this: I thought that he appeared wise to many people and *especially to himself*, but he was not. I then tried to show him that he thought himself wise, but that he was not. As a result he came to dislike me, and so did many of the bystanders. (*Apology*, 21b-21c, emphasis mine)

The “reputed wise” in this passage and Socrates are alike in so far as neither possesses any form of knowledge. Their difference, however, derives from the fact that Socrates, by virtue of operating in a structureless language, can comprehend that knowledge is an indeterminate concept in the Kantian sense, whereas the wise man’s thoughts are confined by logocentric dichotomies. According to Socrates, by identifying him as wise, the God at Delphi is not attributing the *existence* of wisdom within him, but rather *negating* it altogether in *all* mortal individuals: “What is probable, gentlemen, is that in fact the god is wise and that his oracular response meant that human wisdom is worth little or *nothing*” (23a, emphasis mine). In his recognition of “human wisdom” as an aporetic⁴ void, Socrates illustrates any type of knowledge to be a surplus of this very lack, hence why the only wisdom achievable by

SITU

the individual would be “nothing.” Following that logic, it would be impossible for Socrates to “stud[y] things in the sky and below the earth” while “teach[ing] these same thing to others,” as Meletus’ accusations state, because he has proven, through the illustration of this non-knowledge, that an individual can never truly obtain knowledge in its totality (19b). Yet consider that, the number ‘zero,’ despite it being a physical representation of a numeric deficit (or a nothing), is still a number—by which I mean that the nothingness of knowledge does not render it intangible. In confessing to an absence of wisdom during his trial, Socrates manipulates this fundamental lack as a form of knowledge that he can appropriate and subsequently use as evidence, thereby demonstrating that ‘nothing’ ultimately remains ‘something.’ Knowledge’s capability of being simultaneously defined through its own deferral and its materiality highlights its playfulness through which the material signifier ‘knowledge’ constantly interchanges between a myriad of varying signifiers (i.e., absence and presence). The lack of a *λόγος* in Socrates’ language, then, reveals itself as the key to his arguments’ effectiveness: in his use of language in its natural state, Socrates uses the process of ‘play’ to negate Meletus’ accusations all while successfully demonstrating the existence of his own wisdom. The downfall of his defense can therefore only be seen as an anticipated consequence to the subsequent logocentric reduction of his language.

Socrates’ invocation of the gods, in his apology, does not come from piety; it is instead an overestimation of the gods’ authority and an attempt to obtain a divine validation for his argument that could encourage the jurymen of Athens to vote in his favor. Socrates demonstrates, in this text alone, that he does not believe in the Greek pantheon as Athenians conventionally do. To further understand Socrates’ relationship to the gods, let us refer to his initial reaction to the God at Delphi’s riddle: “For a long time I was at a loss as to his meaning; then I very reluctantly turned to some such investigation as this: I went to one of those reputed wise, thinking that there, if anywhere, I could refute the oracle and say to it: ‘This man is wiser than I, but you said I was’” (21b). Upon divine interpellation, human individuals—mortals—are expected to immediately produce themselves as the deities’ subjects and comply to their will. Contrastingly, Socrates’ use of the word “reluctantly” implies an aversion or unwillingness, which demonstrates that, instead of assuming without hesitation the Oracle at Delphi’s words as an objective truth, he expresses doubt vis-à-vis the reliability of the god’s words. Put otherwise, he refuses to establish divinity as the defining *λόγος* in his language. Language inevitably shapes thought, since speaking in words is the only means through which one can vocalize, by the *φωνή* [*phonè*] of course, their experiences (*Of Grammatology*, 12). Socrates’ lack of a *λόγος* allows him to think beyond the words of deities because he

SITU

understands that, in the natural state of language, meaning always exists in multiplicity; this results in the repeated expression of his desire for “the whole truth,” hence why he attempts to find a contradiction to the Oracle at Delphi’s claims (*Apology*, 17c). From this investigation, not only does Socrates uncover the aforementioned antinomy of human knowledge, but he also acknowledges that wisdom, thought of as a Kantian indeterminate concept, can only be obtained by the gods (23a). He thereby is a believer of divine superiority in the sense that he accepts the superiority of divine wisdom in comparison to the non-knowledge of mortal individuals, however his lack of immediate compliance to the Oracle’s words proves that he does engage in a conventional pious relationship with the Greek pantheon. His unique relationship with the gods even goes so far as to warrant the accusations that denounce him for “not believe[ing] in the gods in whom the city believes it” (26b). Given this, why, then, does he frame himself as a dutiful servant towards the gods by “attach[ing] the greatest importance to the god’s oracle” (21e) and “call[ing] upon” the divines in his apology as a “trustworthy source” that can support his argument (20e)?

Let us not forget the primary nature of this text: Socrates is being called upon by the men of Athens to defend himself against a plethora of accusations made against his character. Despite the effectiveness of his argument, he is aware that he is not well-liked: “As a result of this investigation, gentlemen of the jury, I acquired much unpopularity, of a kind that is hard to deal with and is a heavy burden,” (22e-23a). This public disdain is further proven by his repeated request—six times, to be precise—for the jurymen to not “create a disturbance” during his speech (17c, 20e, 21a, 27a, 27b, 30c). Taking this into consideration, it is not unusual for Socrates to attempt to gain the favor of his jurymen by grounding his arguments on the seemingly irrefutable words of the gods, which is an authority that these Athenians are normatively expected to respect without question. Nevertheless, in centering the gods’ words as the point of presence in his system of language, Socrates is directly going the foundation of his defense—that of the inability to achieve stability in the production of meaning—by framing his newfound *λόγος* (and himself, by affirming his position as a divinely-appointed servant) as a source of *objective* truth.

Consequently, with this borrowed authority, Socrates becomes overconfident and he misrecognizes his claims to be factually correct by placing them in direct opposition to Meletus’ statements. His arrogance leaks throughout his speech during his cross-examination with Meletus: Socrates repeats a series of pressing sentences that all begin with a variety of demanding imperatives such as “come,” “come here,” and “come then,” through which he demands from Meletus a swifter response to his questions, and he thus taunts his accuser by presenting him as a man

SITU

who remains “silent and know[s] not what to say,” presenting this deficit of knowledge as a proof of bad character when, ironically, Socrates prided himself on this lack in his initial argument (24d). Furthermore, when confronted with the allegation that he, alone, is corrupting the youth of Athens, Socrates requests for Meletus to frame this accusation in the context of the wellbeing of horses, and he asks him if it is indeed true that, most likely, it is a sole individual—the “horse breeders”—that is able to care for the horse while the rest of the people, unaware of how to care for the horse, corrupt the animal (25b). He does not wait for Meletus’ response before answering his own question: “Of course it is, whether you and Anytus say so or not,” once more betraying his hubris (25b). This interjection is a blatant dismissal of Meletus’ impending answer and a reaffirmation of Socrates’ belief that, by being a messenger for the gods, he is the deliverer of indisputable truth. In the scenario of the horse, Socrates presents the horse breeders as a minority of the population—one can even claim that they are a *singularity*. By being the *solitary* accused in the courtroom, the imagery of the horse is meant to frame himself in the role of the horse breeder. He is thereby claiming that the rest of the population lacks the appropriate amount of knowledge needed to educate and influence Athenian youths for the better—a knowledge that he, as the *singular* accused, possesses. By creating a dichotomy between knowledgeable individuals (the horse breeders) and uneducated people (non-horse breeders), Socrates illustrates that his language henceforth exists within the confinement of logocentric binaries. This ironically refutes his initial argument vis-à-vis his first accusation, in which he states that he cannot teach anything to the youths by virtue of not possessing any knowledge. His conformation to logocentrism thus marks the beginning of his argument’s failure.

After this fatal fallacy, Socrates’ verdict of guilty and his following penalty of death is to be expected. It should also not come as a surprise, then, that, upon the failure of his logocentric argument, Socrates sheds the *λόγος* in his system of language because he no longer needs to borrow the gods’ divine authority to support his arguments, which further proves the performativity in his invocation of the gods. His re-entry into the realm of free ‘play’ is illustrated through his parting speech in which he refutes death as defined by being opposite of life: “To fear death, gentlemen, is no other than to think oneself wise when one is not, to think one knows what one does not know” (29a). No one has yet been able to know and share the experience of death in its totality, and yet society attaches such a negative connotation to it that it has now been reified into the worst punishment upon committing wrong actions. This, in itself, is a logocentric fallacy, as Socrates demonstrates by equating the fear of death to the metaphysicality of presence of

SITU

human wisdom. Life is an experience that all beings share—it is a palpable *existence* through *presence*. Contrastingly, through death, the individual is forced into absence and resultantly death is assumed to be the ultimate annihilation of life and the horizon of non-being. Life, then, by being present, is prioritized over death, illustrating the hierarchical favouring of presence that is constitutive of logocentrism; it is accordingly considered to be desirable and morally good. Death, as thought of as the complete opposite of life, is regarded as intrinsically bad and something to be feared.

Socrates destabilizes the dichotomic space between life and death by presenting a radical desire for *death*. He argues that the association of these negative connotations with the idea of death is a “pretence of wisdom” in as much as it is ultimately insinuating a basis of knowledge—that is, in fact, nonexistent—vis-à-vis the experience of death that allows one to fear it; it is a concealment of a fear of the unknown (29a). He compares himself with Achilles’ last battle with Hector as a means to argue that desiring life, following the announcement of his verdict and his penalty, would demand of him to stop practicing his philosophy—an action which he believes is appointed to him by the gods and would thereby be morally wrong to do (28e). On the other hand, no one can truly know the morality of death as it is an aporetic ground of non-knowledge, which leads Socrates to claim that he “shall never fear or avoid things of which [he does] not know, for whether they may not be good rather than things that I know to be bad” (29b). In his acknowledgment of his lack of wisdom, then, Socrates demonstrates how death is the best, most morally sound option for him, and he consequently rejects the conventional definition of death that reviles it according to a logocentric binary. His deconstruction of death is therefore a continuation of his defense against Meletus’ first accusations.

In Plato’s *Apology*, Socrates’ defense synthesizes the Socratic method and free ‘play’ to reverse the order of what is normally considered to be attainable human wisdom. In his engagement of a dialogue based on questions and answers deconstructing the concept of knowledge and subsequently of death, it is important to notice that Socrates never offers a concrete definition for these terms; there is never a stable or factual answer given to his investigation, leaving thereby a void ground—one constituted by absence—as the only foundation for everything society has claimed to understand, as per Derrida’s theorization of language’s inherent instability. That said, my argument in this analysis of Socrates’ apology—and I do hope this has come across sufficiently—is not positing for the impossibility of knowledge, but rather that the absence of such does not render it nonexistent. Despite the glaring aporia in the process of meaning-making, Socrates reveals that the negation of an absolute truth (or, put otherwise, a non-knowledge) is still

SITU

something to be taken as a truth. By illustrating the multiplicity of signification in diction, Socrates' language is able to produce a double-meaning in the sign 'knowledge.' It is thus only through his lack of a centering *λόγος* that he successfully negates his accusations, revealing thus the essence of language in its natural state in his defense. The failure of Socrates' argument, then, is entirely due to the confinement of this very language into logocentric fallacies.

1. All uses of the word "play" in this analysis and its adjacent forms follow the Derridean definition of "free play," which I will expand on later in this paper.
2. It is important to note that, despite the obvious similarities between Socratic dialogues and Derridean deconstructionism that I will elaborate on further in this paper, I am not claiming to know or understand Socrates' intentions behind his defense, nor am I attempting to present him as a predecessor of Derridean thought. I acknowledge that my research is theoretically speculative and thereby this paper should be read as a purely interpretive work.
3. I draw the term "aporetic" from Derrida's theorization of the *aporia*. In the context of literary analysis, this term refers to the phenomenon in which a text centers around a lack of knowledge, rendering thereby the absence of the centering to be, in itself, the center of the text (*Writing and Difference*, 154).
4. Derrida, in *Of Grammatology* (1976), defines the *φωνή* as such: "What is said of sound in general is a fortiori for the phonè by which, by virtue of hearing (understanding) oneself speak—an indissociable system—the subject affects itself and is related to itself in the element of ideality," (12). Our own physical vocalization, according to Derrida, is irrefutably linked to how we view ourselves. Since this term reveals how our speech—and thereby language—affects the production of thought, it is pertinent to include this word in this sentence.

WORKS CITED

Plato. "Apology." *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy: from Thales to Aristotle*. Translated by G.M.A. Grube. Hackett Publishing Company, 2000, pp. 112-130.

Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. The John Hopkins University Press, 1976.

———. *Specters of Marx*. Translated by Peggy Kamuf. Routledge, 1994. Kindle edition.

———. *Writing and Difference*. Translated by Alan Bass. The University of Chicago Press, 1978. Kindle edition.

Tongue in Cheek: From the Metaphor to the Literal

by Faith Ruetas

In the context of American slave narratives, the tongue is a common vehicle for metaphor: the “runaway tongue” signifies oral resistance, the “broken tongue” a lost dialect (Mullen, Dunbar). Though long normalized in daily parlance, this manner of abstraction functions to separate characters from their viscerally embodied realities in autobiographical slave narratives. For Harriet Jacobs and Frederick Douglass, the tongue is a concept of wildness—a separate entity to be tamed. The body is thus disassembled and replaced with a discursive unit, distancing the depicted individuals from their lived oppression. In contemporary narratives of slavery, by contrast, the tongue is literalized and returned to characters’ bodies. For Toni Morrison, this precious organ is the means through which characters are wounded both physically and spiritually. Continuing this concretizing trend, Yaa Gyasi expands the tongue into a powerful means of personal reclamation. Not only do contemporary slave narratives re-embody the tongue, then, but in doing so, they restore the bodies of the characters to rightful self-ownership. By tracking this evolution of the tongue from an idiom to a personal organ, one sees a parallel progression of the genre’s characters: whereas earlier speakers of autobiographical slave narratives served editor-mediated, abolitionist motives, later contemporary writers reformed the genre by depicting fully fleshed, self-governing individuals.

Throughout their autobiographical recounts of slavery, Harriet Jacobs and Frederick Douglass use the tongue as a metaphor, thereby disassociating the narration from the characters’ corporeal experiences. In *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Jacobs describes a scene in which an enslaved woman is sold by the man who impregnated her: “When the mother was delivered into the trader’s hands, she said ‘You promised to treat me well.’ To which [Dr. Flint] replied, ‘You have let your

RUETAS

tongue run too far; damn you!” (24). By personifying the tongue at the same time that she abstracts it, Jacobs transforms the act of disclosure into an unruly force of which the woman lost control. The tongue, by “run[ning]” off in disobedience, becomes a self-autonomous entity that separates itself from the woman and steals away—as if she were betrayed by someone or something other than Dr. Flint. In reality, this is a woman who has been physically violated, then discarded upon reporting this fact. By conveying this situation through a metaphor that, in turn, displaces the focus from bodily transgression to forbidden admission, Jacobs disembodies the woman’s trauma. In the words of Christine Okoth, this substitution of the discursive for the physical is a “means of avoiding confrontation with the real violence inflicted on the bodies of Black people” (3). Given the external, abolitionist-motivated editors influencing Jacobs’ writing, this metaphorizing makes sense. At the time, autobiographical slave narratives communicated slavery’s routine dehumanization to promote the abolitionist cause, but to thoroughly transmit its material anguish would alienate white readers. By using the tongue as an abstraction of resistance, Jacobs thereby mitigates the corporeal terror implicit in this scene and renders the illustrated situation more digestible for her intended white audience.

Frederick Douglass employs a similarly abstracted tongue to evade viscerality in *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. He describes how the slaveholders dispatch “spies among their slaves, to ascertain their views and feelings in regard to their condition. The frequency of this has had the effect to establish among the slaves a maxim, that a still tongue makes a wise head” (Douglass 19). Of course, what Douglass omits here are the punitive actions taken by the slaveholders with the intelligence gleaned. Through his metaphor of the “still tongue,” suggesting repressed internal strife, he implies that preemptive punishments are dealt to those expressing negativity “in regard to their condition.” If this is true, then it is not simply the “frequency” of the espionage that taught the enslaved people to remain silent, but also the corporeal abuse meted out to those who were not. Rather than detail this punishment, Douglass, like Jacobs, shifts the focus to an abstracted, personified “still tongue” and “wise head.” He dispenses an adage that deconstructs the enslaved people into body parts, conveying the maxim resulting from their torture and not the torture itself. Through this act of disassembly, we see how “the real bodies of racialized people come to be replaced by a discursive composite” that “refuse[s] to let the bodies of Black people speak” (Okoth 1, 2). Both Jacobs and Douglass brush past the bodily horror in these scenes, instead relying on metaphorized tongues to gesture toward what actually occurred. The overall effect is a distanced abstraction befitting characters whose purpose is to reveal to white readers the injustice of slavery, but without steeping them in the harrowing corporeal experience therein.

RUETAS

Diverging from autobiographical narratives of slavery, Toni Morrison literalizes the tongue as a receptor of injury and lets it speak, to use Okoth's terms. This occurs in *Beloved* when Sethe and Paul D discuss their past at Sweet Home Plantation, toeing the subject of how the latter was gagged like an animal: "He wants to tell me, she thought. He wants me to ask him about what it was like for him—about how offended the tongue is, held down by iron, how the need to spit is so deep you cry for it. She already knew about it, had seen it time after time" (Morrison 84). Unlike the metaphorical tongues in Jacobs and Douglass, that of Paul D is literally "offended" and "held down." Though never explicitly named, the bit's weight on the tongue here is textually palpable. Note the repetition of "He wants," the layering of hard [h] sounds, and the incomplete clauses in "how offended the tongue is, held down by iron, how the need to spit is so deep" and "had seen it time after time." This consonance, when paired with the repeatedly thwarted semantic completion, creates a heaving lilt, as if the narration is itself hampered by the "iron" bit. Morrison thus evokes the ache of Paul D's tongue through the very sentence structure that describes it, underscoring his pain as one that moves beyond the mere physical. After all, the "violations of the physical and psychological personhood of the enslaved... were borne on and by the body" (Wallace 1). As both the receptor and the carrier of pain, the tongue is a physical tether to historical suffering. By focalizing its anguish through her narration, Morrison allows the Black body to speak this truth, thereby recognizing and concretizing Paul D's trauma without separating him from his embodied experience. Through this emphasis of the tongue as a literal body part, a receiver of pain, and a narrative focalizer, Morrison effectively fleshes out past wounds, retroactively reincarnating Black bodies lost to time and audience-placating abstraction.

Though Morrison returns corporeality to her characters' experiences, the tongue's continual hurting betrays that Paul D's body is not fully his; in *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi, however, Abena evidences her liberty by choosing to use her tongue as a means for personal reclamation. Generations after her great-grandmother's death, Abena learns the former's name: "'Effia,' Abena repeated. It was the first time she had heard the name of one of her ancestors, and she savored the taste of the name on her tongue. She wanted to say it again and again. Effia. Effia" (Gyasi 152). Although Abena is only given a name—not a photograph, place, or story—receiving and echoing it for "the first time" anchors her to her lost family. Notice, further, how Abena uses her tongue to affect this restoration. While one might read this detail as metaphorical, consider that "[w]hat can be tasted is always something that can be touched" (Aristotle 421b1–9). Through this lens, one comes to understand Abena's experience as both physical and transcendent. Abena, importantly, does not simply "speak" her great-grandmother's name, but "savor[s]" it. By forming the phonetic

RUETAS

shape of this new information with her tongue, she touches the family line from which she was hitherto disconnected. What might initially seem to be abstraction or metaphor, then, is actually an expansion to a fuller, multisensory incorporation of knowledge within and through the body: she “repeat[s],” “hear[s],” “savor[s],” and with this final act reaches beyond her present physicality to identify and reclaim an ancestry previously unreachable. When her stated desire to “say it again and again” is followed by the narrational refrain of “Effia. Effia,” Abena’s reclamatory agency literally permeates the text itself. By using her tongue to catalyze a metaphysical revelation, Abena takes full control of her body for her own, personal discovery. Gyasi therefore breaks from Jacobs, Douglass, and Morrison by not only returning corporeality to her characters, but returning the Black body to rightful self-ownership.

The tongue can be many things: an idiom, a maxim, a wet piece of flesh. By tracing its form through the evolution of the autobiographical slave narrative to the contemporary narrative of slavery, one sees a parallel progression—from the abstract to the concrete—in the depicted characters. For Jacobs and Douglass, the tongue is conceptual just as their conceptual selves are disseminated for abolitionist motives, elucidating the injustice of slavery without making the reader *feel* this corporeally. For Morrison and Gyasi, on the other hand, the tongue is literalized and focalized just as the characters themselves are fully realized individuals, generating reclamatory works that reaccess the voices of the enslaved. Though an often-overlooked aspect of the American narratives of slavery, the tongue, then, is not just a pithy metaphor or a mere body part. In measuring its level of abstraction, the trauma it carries, and the power it reclaims, one finds reflected the authorial intentions of the one who speaks (or writes) it into existence.

RUETAS

Gyasi, Yaa. *Homegoing*. Anchor Canada, 2017.

Jacobs, Harriet A. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Dover Publications, 2001.

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. Vintage Books, 2004.

Mullen, Harryette. "Runaway Tongue: Resistant Orality in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Our Nig*, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, and *Beloved*." *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America*. Edited by Shirley Samuels, Oxford UP, 1992, pp. 244–64.

Okoth, Christine. "15 - The Black Body and the Reading of Race." *The Cambridge Companion to American Literature and the Body*, by Travis M. Foster, Cambridge University Press, 2022, pp. 227–241.

Wallace, Maurice. "3 - Slavery, Disability, and the Black Body/White Body Complex in the American Slave Narrative." *The Cambridge Companion to American Literature and the Body*, by Travis M. Foster, Cambridge University Press, 2022, pp. 44–58.

This essay contains references to violence throughout and a brief mention of SA in the author's analysis of power and violence in *Titus Andronicus*.

Plant-Powered Shakespeare: Botanics and Gendered Violence in *Titus Andronicus* and *Richard II*

by AnnaClare Sung

Flowers, trees, corn, and apricots—the floral and botanical motifs in *Titus Andronicus* and *Richard II* present Shakespeare's gardens as plentiful and peculiar. While this imagery possesses aesthetic functions, it also parallels concepts of power. In "Botanical Shakespeares," Jean Feerick discusses race and Shakespeare's plant imagery in *Titus Andronicus*; comparatively, in "Botanomorphism and Temporality," Elizabeth Crachiolo suggests that such symbolism renders the characters in *Richard II* vegetables themselves. The relationship between power and violence complicates these authors' arguments. As such, the botanics in *Titus Andronicus*' Act Two Scene Three demonstrate how prevailing bloodlines are contingent on bloodlust and loss. *Richard II*'s Act Three Scene Four illustrates how Richard, in particular, lacks power because of his inaction. Ultimately, through botanical imagery, the Shakespearean Greenworld (which lies outside societal norms and confines) and the repressed voices of figures lacking stately power—namely Aaron and Tamora in *Titus Andronicus* and the Gardener and Servants in *Richard II*—both plays suggest that violence is a gendered weapon necessary for establishing and maintaining power. In *Titus Andronicus*, anyone can wield this violence, whereas in *Richard II*, aristocrats are wholly culpable.

For Crachiolo, Shakespeare's plant imagery exposes the weak spots in Richard's power. Equating the state to a garden and turning characters into plants (what she calls "botanomorphism"), Crachiolo claims Shakespeare "set up a situation in which various plantlike characters vie for the privileges of being deeply rooted in the land of England and growing vigorously in its garden" (274). Though Crachiolo elucidates humorous images of plant-presenting characters fighting each other, the point stands, as it situates King Richard's power. As a symbol of the state

SUNG

and ruler of his realm, Richard is both the garden and the gardener; the characters' "roots" are at his mercy. In Act 3 Scene 4, the gardener commands the servants:

Go bind thou up yond dangling apricots,
Which like unruly children make their sire
Stoop with oppression of their prodigal weight.
Give some supportance to the bending twigs. (3.4.38–31)

The apricots are the tree's constituents, weighing down their leader. "Even as a tree Richard is weak," Crachiolo says, referencing the passage (273). The gardener and servants tend to these structural issues, suggesting that Richard failed to do the same. He let himself and the state bend, sway, and snap in the wind. If both the tree and the state embody Richard, the state and the tree become one. The state's leaders are the twigs that cause growth; failing to trim and tend to these overgrowths, however, sacrifices support and perpetuates weakness in leadership. Richard's tree-like embodiment represents his weakness, but also his inability to properly ground and govern his people.

While Crachiolo relates kingship to plants and power in *Richard II*, Feerick discusses how the imagery exposes oppressive rule in *Titus Andronicus*, particularly through how Tamora's pathetic fallacy accentuates Rome's effective othering of her and Aaron. At the start of Act 2 Scene 3, the two escape to the woods; in this moment of pathetic fallacy, Tamora describes, through a lens of joy and contentment, a Shakespearean Green World outside Saturnitus's kingdom (2.3.10–29) where "both Aaron and Tamora imagin[e] themselves as Romans" (Feerick 90). All too soon, however, Bassianus disrupts this magical space outside of social confines. Tamora reverts to an individual oppressed by the state as she laments, "The trees, though summer, yet forlorn and lean, / Overcome with moss and baleful mistletoe" (2.3.94–5). For Tamora, Bassianus sours nature's beauty; the bright imagery that overwhelmed her psyche moments before turns dark. An abundance of moss suffocates the trees—a symbol of the state themselves—and parasitic mistletoe anchors itself to the bark, hindering the tree's ability to grow. Feerick writes that "[i]n this image, Tamora constructs the world" (91) as a social body in which Titus "seeks to consolidate Roman bonds" (90). Bassianus, a Roman with immense stately power and influence—someone whom this consolidation would benefit—imposes on and stifles this democratizing Green World. As Tamora's perspective shifts from joy (expressed through the forest's initial magnificence), to grief (shown later in her account of nature's oppressive functions), she realizes she and Aaron live in a world where they cannot coexist with the Romans and are abruptly othered.

Both Feerick and Crachiolo highlight underprivileged voices expressing their thoughts on the plays' authoritative figures—the oppressed speaking about

SUNG

the oppressors. Violence's role in power underlies many of these dialogues. In *Richard II*, the gardener and servants expose, through their plant-oriented idiolect, how Richard's ineptitude connects to his refusal of violence. The gardener adopts an authoritative role, telling the servants:

like an executioner
Cut off the heads of too-fast-growing sprays
That look too lofty in our commonwealth...I will go root away
The noisome weeds that without profit suck
The soil's fertility from wholesome flowers. (3.4.28–39)

By demonstrating his ability to reign over his nursery, the gardener emphasizes Richard's inability to reign over his kingdom; he commands his servants as a King would command an executioner and then stresses that he, too, will contribute to tending the gardens by weeding. However, the ineptitude the gardener alludes to extends past Richard's distant approach to controlling and tending to the realm. The gardener discards diseased weeds that harm the potential for other, more beneficial growth, and, like executioners at the King's behest, the servants behead foliage-bearing branches. As King, Richard does not properly weed—or rather kill—the people who crowded the state's gardens and prevented growth within the kingdom. He was not attentive to the kingdom's needs, which required violence. Such imagery, when applied to Crachiolo's claim that equates characters to plants, suggests that the gardener, through simile, views Richard's lack of violence as a crucial issue. Appropriately, *Richard II* lacks on-stage violence, bar Richard's death, which reflects his negligence.

More overtly than in *Richard II*, violence lurks within Act Two Scene Three of *Titus Andronicus* through Aaron's orchestration of murder; his actions disrupt traditional ideas of authority (wielded by aristocracy and government) but reinforce the necessity of violence for effective leadership. Aaron plots to frame the murder of Bassianus on Titus's sons, Quintus and Martius. He forges a letter, signing it as the two brothers, which reads:

Look for thy reward
Among the nettles at the elder tree
Which overshades the mouth of that same pit
Where we decreed to bury Bassianus. (2.3.271–4)

The letter, which validates Aaron's claims and protects his liability, allows this scene to unfold as it does. The gold sits underneath the elder stately tree, within the stinging nettles. Whoever collects the gold, presumably who Quintus and Martius paid to kill Bassianus, will be stung. The state harms those who harm the state; as such, Aaron inserts a subtle statement within the letter's botanical language, referring to the violence entrenched in *Titus Andronicus*' circular revenge plot.

SUNG

However, Aaron also expresses that the pit where Quintus, Martius, and the deceased Bassianus lie sits within the tree's shade. The pit is still within the tree's jurisdiction; the state subordinates Quintus, Martius, and Bassianus. But in this odd Green World-esque place (which, though it has shifted for Tamora, remains as such for Aaron), Aaron is in command. He directs every motion and Quintus, Martius, and Bassianus sit in tree-projected darkness—just as Aaron's skin is dark. Thus here, Aaron subverts tradition and rules with violence over those who previously ruled over him. Aaron's operation reflects that while he believes violence is necessary for functioning kingdoms, he does not endorse the violence typical of Titus Andronicus. The instance of violence at the apex of Aaron's plans—Bassianus's murder—is very much outward and onstage as Demetrius and Chiron stab Bassianus, reflecting the more visible presence of violence in comparison to *Richard II*.

While the relationship between violence and power is present in both plays through botanical imagery, the characters calling attention to this relationship are equally important. By assigning lines to underprivileged voices, Shakespeare demonstrates how violence is explicitly gendered for subordinate groups. Just before raping Lavinia, Demetrius proclaims, "First, thrash the corn, then after burn the straw" (*Titus Andronicus* 2.3.123). As Demetrius compares Lavinia to corn, he explains that he and Chiron will first rape her (thrash) and then kill her (burn). Rendering Lavinia a vegetable with respect to Crachiolo's argument, these men also render her an object to be consumed. The idea that her vegetative state transforms post-rape from corn to straw suggests that once raped, she is a hollow object—just straw or a shell with no substance. Power, in this sense, does not directly relate to politics but to gendered violence. Kaitlyn Regher and Cheryl Regher write: "Titus and not Lavinia is the victim of the crime, it is his suffering that is important" (29). Demetrius and Chiron use Lavinia to get to Titus; they gain power over him through this act of female-directed violence. Furthermore, Feerick explains that, later in the play, Lucius's "use of the image of a vegetable body—a sheaf of corn—to transmit political vision is [...] indicative of a large pattern in the play whereby natural forms are made to carry complex social valences" (87). For Demetrius and Chiron, Lavinia holds great potential to increase their power. By enacting such violence on Lavinia while also comparing her to corn, it is evident that Lavinia is not their intended prey; she simply serves as a proxy to the state. In this way, Shakespeare suggests that violence—gendered violence to be exact—is the only way to disturb a stagnant state.

In *Richard II*, too, subordinated characters expose the prevalence of gendered violence, though the focus shifts to those in charge rather than the subjects and oppressed themselves. From one servant's perspective, Shakespeare writes:

SUNG

When our sea-walled garden, the whole land,
Is full of weeds, her fairest flowers choked up,
Her fruit trees all unpruned, her hedges ruined,
Her knots disordered, and her wholesome herbs. (3.4.43–6)

In using the garden as a metaphor for Richard's state, the servant further personifies the state as a woman—a mother in particular. He likens a disorganized realm to a bedraggled, infertile woman. The weeds Richard failed to tend—to unroot from their nutrients and life source—do not just prohibit reproduction and growth within the state. Rather, they kill all existing life, particularly the flowers. Crachiolo writes, “Flowers are associated with women, young women in particular, and they are also applied to men who are weak or effeminate. Richard [...] is botanomorphized as a flower” (Crachiolo 271-2). In this sense, through his inaction, Richard's downfall is feminized, and peaks upon his murder, like a flower plucked and robbed of its life. As a flower, Richard is betrayed by the very weeds that he failed to cut—suffocated by their abundance. Shakespeare redirects responsibility for the failing state to those with roles in the monarchy rather than distributing it amongst all characters as in *Titus Andronicus*, exhibiting how Richard's passivity induces gendered violence on both the feminized state and himself.

Conversely, for those not subject to state-driven discrimination and oppression, gender identity is a non-issue. In Act 2 Scene 3, when Quintus first peers into the Bassianus-condemned pit, he exclaims:

What subtle hole is this, [...]
Upon whose leaves are drops of new-shed blood
As fresh as morning dew distilled on flowers? (*Titus Andronicus* 2.3.198-202)

For Quintus, blood on leaves equates to dew on flowers; while the leaves recall Richard's kingdom/tree growth, blood-covered leaves represent a state where violence perpetuates further growth. The comparison of blood and dew furthers this metaphor, suggesting that just as dew helps flowers complete their metabolic processes, blood elicits a kingdom's expansion. Thus, violence and bloodshed refresh and revitalize a kingdom. The leaves that Quintus mentions are separate from his identity; Shakespeare genders neither the flowers nor the briars. Violence is a mechanism for political growth—something to perpetuate power.

This phenomenon, wherein violence is fundamental to power, is also apparent in *Richard II*, though presented differently. In the scene preceding Richard's deposition, he speaks down to Northumberland from a balcony, saying:

Ten thousand bloody crowns of mothers' sons
Shall ill become the flower of England's face, [...]
Her pastor's grass with faithful English blood. (3.3.93)

Condemning Bolingbroke's call for war, Richard predicts what will ensue. To get the crown, Bolingbroke must commit violent acts; to usurp is to destroy, and Bolingbroke's war will sentence many men to death. Their blood will spill and water the garden of England—sprouting flowers that represent “her” transformation from an innocent figure to a violence-ridden one. Richard uses a similar image from *Titus Andronicus*, that of blood as dew on England's grass. Although Richard represents anti-violence (at least on-stage), violence and bloodshed again become perpetrators of political growth or transformation.

While Richard uses specific pronouns in this passage, personifying a feminine England and denoting the male identities of those who will fight, such gendered terms are not concerned with identity itself. Bolingbroke's war, to Richard, is not an act of gendered violence directed towards a feminized England. Instead, such pronouns indicate Richard's concern for the wider implications of war and violence. The people who fight in these wars happen to be men. He worries less about their identity as men and more about what they symbolize as fighters for the state and what their violent deaths imply—more about England's “sons” than England herself. Ultimately, Richard indicates that peace is only achievable through violence—only after all this bloodshed will Bolingbroke be able to rule in a peaceful kingdom.

The prevalence of plants in *Titus Andronicus* and *Richard II* exceeds the one-dimensional concepts of power and violence. In both plays, Shakespeare's botanical imagery addresses structural power, violence as a result of or response to such power, and gendered violence as a means to transcend that power. In *Titus Andronicus*, the playwright accepts violence as a reaction to oppressive systems; Aaron—and even Demetrius and Chiron, though their actions are unjustifiable—must fight for his humanity. In *Richard II*, the gardeners blame exclusively the monarchical authority for the violence. From *Titus Andronicus* to *Richard II*, Shakespeare clarifies how power, and thus political systems and their leaders, incite violence, gendered or not. At what cost, he asks, does power cease to be worth such violence?

WORKS CITED

Crachiolo, Elizabeth. “Botanomorphism and Temporality: Imagining Humans as Plants in Two Shakespeare Plays.” *Shakespeare's Botanical Imagination*, edited by Susan C. Staub, Amsterdam University Press, 2023, pp. 267–284. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9789048551101.015>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2023.

Feerick, Jean. “Botanical Shakespeares: The Racial Logic of Plant Life in *Titus Andronicus*.” *South Central Review*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2009, pp. 82–102. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40211292>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2023.

SUNG

Regehr, Kaitlyn and Cheryl Regehr. "Let Them Satisfy Thus Lust on Thee: *Titus Andronicus* As Window into Societal Views of Rape and PTSD." *Traumatology*, vol. 18, no. 2, 2012, pp. 27–34, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1534765611426791>.

Shakespeare, William. *Richard the Second*. The Norton Shakespeare. Edited by Steven Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Suzanne Gossett, Jean E. Howard, Katharine Eisaman Maus, and Gordon McMullan, W.W. Norton & Company, 2016, pp. 885–956.

Shakespeare, William. *Titus Andronicus*. The Norton Shakespeare. Edited by Steven Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Suzanne Gossett, Jean E. Howard, Katharine Eisaman Maus, and Gordon McMullan, W.W. Norton & Company, 2016, pp. 491–554.





Untitled
—
Untitled
Ramsey Headrick

The Problematic of Force in M. NourbeSe Philip's "Zong! #1"

by Haider Ali

Jacques Derrida writes in "Force and Signification" of the relationship between force and language: "The force of the work, the force of genius, the force, too, of that which engenders in general is precisely that which resists geometrical metaphorization and is the proper object of literary criticism" (23). We may here consider force to be the originary violence through which language emerges, the latter being an attempt at a 'geometrical metaphorization' of the former—but failing to do so, since force, as Derrida tells us, is 'that which resists geometrical metaphorization. In other words, language cannot capture force, precisely because language as such is an institution of neutralisation; that is, language neutralises an event's force qua force by dissipating it into form, through the signifier. To put it bluntly, we see here, with the institution of language, a symbolic mediation of the real, which positions said real—force—as *Wirklichkeit* [actuality], or structural causality.¹ The question of force is especially relevant when reading M. NourbeSe Philip's poetry collection, *Zong!*, which, as its emphatic title suggests, meditates on the *Zong* massacre and the problematic of language as a means of mediating history. Though Philip, like Derrida, treats language—specifically the financial and legal language associated with the court cases around the *Zong* massacre—as an entity that neutralises the violence of the *Zong* massacre, I nevertheless invoke Derrida, since his focus is on language *as such* as a metaphysics of presence that will always fail to capture force, which is, in some ways, a broader claim than Philip's.²

The *Zong* massacre, as Philip relates it, was an effort on the part of the slave owners on the *Zong* to profit off their slaves' deaths after suffering supply shortages due to navigational errors. The ship owners, including Luke Collingwood,

committed “the massacre of the African slaves,” which would be, in their eyes, “more financially advantageous... than if the slaves were allowed to die of ‘natural causes’” (Philip 189). Philip, restricting herself to writing her collection using the financial and legal documents that dealt with this massacre, is faced with the problematic of representing a lost experience—that of the slave on the *Zong*—that has additionally been mediated exclusively by colonial positions. I will suggest, however, that what Philip really grapples with by delimiting such confines for herself is the neutralisation of the force of the massacre through financial and legal language. “*Zong! #1*,” the opening to the *Zong!* collection, is the pinnacle of Philip’s destabilising experimental style that works, I will argue, to recognise and recentre the force of the *Zong* massacre, lost as it is to the neutralisations of language. Meaning in presence is eschewed so as to acknowledge absent force; the real is elliptically approached through the symbolic.

Inasmuch as it is a rejection of traditional linguistic conventions, the agrammatical—that is, outside the bounds of grammar—nature of “*Zong! #1*” aims, I argue, to expose the signifier as complicit in a historical privileging of presence that suppresses the expression of real force. Owing to Philip’s destruction of the signifier to its atomic level, the letter, “*Zong! #1*” is near incomprehensible on an initial readthrough. Four iterations of the single letter “w” begin the poem, followed by an “a” and a “wa” (“*Zong! #1*” 1).³ Immediately, the reader is transported into a poetic landscape without its words, instead constituted by the letters that may constitute a word. By thus reducing the signifier to its constituent parts, Philip subverts all expectations of a fixed, logical poetic exposition, instead achieving a *Verfremdungseffekt*, or defamiliarising the reader; that is, denying them an immersion into the temporality of the poem.⁴ Rather, the reader is made to reckon with their own temporality relative to the poem, being actively situated as a consumer of the letter detached from the temporality of the letter as such. The letter is what the reader is encountering, not the *Zong* massacre. The poem makes obvious, in this manner, the material presence of the letter on the page as a veil masking a real *Wirklichkeit*: force.

In this relation to the materiality of the letter, the reader is brought to reckon with the materiality of the signifier as pure presence that has, at most, illusory ties to real force. “*Zong! #1*” continues its visually deconstructed approach to language by beginning to form a signifier: a “w” is brought into syntagmatic association with an “a” and a “t,” which in turn are followed by “er” in the subsequent line (2-3). Philip allows the reader to observe the genesis of the signifier: the little presences inscribed on the surface of the paper—I mean the letter—are combined before us, their identity as individual letters always affirmed by the intermittent spaces, into the signifier, ‘water.’ The signifier, constituted as it is by mere letters, is made to be

recognised as merely another material presence on a page—not some metaphysical entity that may reproduce the force of an event like the *Zong* massacre. Philip, with this established, works through the notion that the language of finance and the language of law—which she deploys in her poem—both use the signifier as a stand-in for the real events of the massacre. This approach is one concerned with particular deployments of language, rather than language in and of itself. I shall further the stakes of Philip’s argument by underscoring that, in thus exposing the metaphysics of presence—a metaphysics that suppresses force, insofar as force is absence—at play in the signifier, Philip guides the reader to a position where they may challenge their consumption of the signifier as a means of accessing the historical real. Fundamentally, we, as readers, and Philip, as poet, *cannot* know the force behind the available historical documents that deal with the *Zong* massacre. This is a key principle emanating out of “*Zong!* #1,” the principle of unknowability that stains language in its function as a vehicle towards knowledge.

The letter, as it operates in “*Zong!* #1” also constructs a soundscape to form a *glissement* at the atomic dimension of the signifier that, though within the bounds of the symbolic, transports the reader, at least in a sense of phenomenal imagination, to an approximation of the force of the *Zong* massacre. Should we compose signifiers out of the letters available to us in Philip’s poem, we might arrive at “water,” “was,” “won,” “want,” along with other words (2-3, 3, 11, 21-22). I have intentionally focused on the letter ‘w’ in this instance as it is of particular note, appearing thirty-one times in the poem. The ‘w’ overwhelms the poem with its alliterative punctuation. Usually a euphonic consonant with a whispery, gliding effect—at least when alliterated across full words—I will contend that the ‘w’ in Philip’s poem gains a cacophony through its sheer over-repetition; indeed, the proximity of all the ‘w’ sounds lends into a spluttering sound. A sound that is associated with drowning, the splutter is an imaginative projection of the reader into the setting of the *Zong*. It retains fidelity to what is known by reproducing the language of financial and legal documents, but distorts said language in a way that frees the letter from the neutrality previously imposed upon it. A symbolic *glissement* into the historical occurs; that is, in the interstices of the text, those lacunae between the letters, the letter transcends its materiality, psychically staging the scene of the slaves of the *Zong*, drowning in the ocean waters, for the reader. The soundscape of the letter, simply speaking, operates on a phenomenal level in addition to a significative level—and in this former, an approximation, but assuredly not some ἀλήθεια [disclosure], of real force may be said to transpire.

There is a hole within the whole of “*Zong!* #1” that collapses the reader, as subject of the scopic function, in relation to the notion of meaning.⁵ Lacan proposes a definition of the gaze, tied to the scopic drive, in relation to his notion of the *objet*

petit a: “In so far as the gaze, *qua objet a*, may come to symbolize this central lack expressed in the phenomenon of castration... it leaves the subject in ignorance as to what there is beyond the appearance” (77). The *objet a* is that which ‘leaves the subject in ignorance as to what there is beyond the appearance.’ The imaginary ‘appearance’ in question becomes a screen that denies the subject mastery over their scopical field, instating the idea of lack *qua* lack of mastery—and with it, forming the economy of desire. Indeed, Todd McGowan adds that “[t]his gap [the *objet a*] within our look marks the point at which our desire manifests itself in what we see” (*The Real Gaze* 6). In what is otherwise, visually, a space of the letter and of the signifier, a white hole disturbs “*Zong!* #1.” It exists as lack, a lack of material. This lack—the receptacle of the eye, the site of the gaze—is essential to Philip’s poetic vision because it neither acknowledges the reader, nor yields to the reader’s interpretive efforts. It is a place where the reader, as a subject in control of the poem, is eviscerated: ignorant of that which is impossible to know—the hole is of course a pure blankness, not written over by any illusion of meaning, real or contingent—the reader is denied any sense of mastery over Philip’s poem. The blank space haunting the poem may be read, but any attempt to understand it will inevitably be insufficient, or lacking.

Through this performance of impossibility, understood here according to the *objet a*, Philip also generates a desire on behalf of the reader for what is an absence. The exercise is one of turning the reader away from the metaphysics of presence, operating at the level of the symbolic, towards the level of absence, of force—lost in the morasses of a real. In other words, material presences are left peripheral, while a void becomes central. That which is beyond symbolisation serves as the object-cause of desire, by virtue of it being lacking. This is where, in Philip’s poem, the problematic of desire meshes with the problematic of force: the hole in the centre of the poem is beyond the reader’s reading—just as force is the beyond of signification lost in signification—but nevertheless effects a desire for that beyond, for that force. What Philip achieves, then, is a repositioning of force as the object of reader investment—a libidinal investment, even, considering the economics of desire at play—*par excellence*, despite its latency behind the manifest letters and signifiers of colonial financial and legal documents. Though Philip might not be able to resurrect the force *qua Wirklichkeit* of the massacre, she opens a channel for a reader to cathect their desire to it, which in and of itself is a critical first step towards appreciating—which, as always, is distinct from concrete knowing—the otherwise foreclosed history therein.

Philip says that *Zong!* tells a “story that cannot be told, yet must be told” (198). What I have endeavoured to demonstrate is that, indeed, the tragedy of the *Zong* is lost to history, its force forgotten to the extent that it, as Philip put it, ‘cannot

be told.’ That is not to say we may not attempt as much, that is, to recapture force; rather, Philip’s approach strives towards this end, for the tragedy ‘must be told.’ To this effect, Philip uses experimental poetic techniques, sonically and visually, to work through the limitations of language—an entity that has long suffocated the *Zong* massacre into a void of neutrality—to return her readers to the question of force. Although we cannot understand the real event, we may appreciate its unknowability and we may imagine its gravity. This, of course, demands new protocols for reading, which are precisely what Philip guides us towards, through her re-centring of absence, of force—of the real *Zong* massacre, not the mediation of the same through colonial language. “*Zong!* #1,” ultimately, is an instance of revolution in poetic boundaries, evincing in its stylistic experimentalism the possibility of a return to the real—not a return as such, but an approximation to be more just—through and in spite of symbolic limitations. It is an attempt to return to structural causality, from within the erected structure, with an acute awareness of its real resistance to total excavation.

1. Terms like ‘real’, ‘imaginary’, and ‘symbolic’ should always be understood in their Lacanian registers. Briefly, I will use ‘real’ to refer to the impossibility that resists symbolisation, ‘imaginary’ to refer to the field of the image and *méconnaissance*, and ‘symbolic’ to refer to that which is rendered into structures and law, especially language.
2. The ‘metaphysics of presence’ is what Derrida’s project seeks to deconstruct. See “Violence and Metaphysics,” in *Writing and Difference*: “Has not the concept of experience always been determined by the metaphysics of presence? Is not experience always an encountering of an irreducible presence, the perception of a phenomenality?” (190).
3. I am citing these lines as horizontal lines. It could be argued that this is not how the poem is to be read, but for simplicity’s sake, I will be adopting such a citation approach.
4. With this use of alienation, I have Bertolt Brecht’s *Verfremdungseffekt* in mind. Brechtian defamiliarisation entails a set of theatrical-stylistic choices that maintain the distance between the stage and the audience, so to foster the audience’s critical engagement with the play—by reminding them of the artifice before them.
5. My use of ‘scopic’ follows Lacan’s in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, where it used to treat the visual field, carrying the implication of the former being a machine or apparatus.

WORKS CITED

Brecht, Bertolt. “On Chinese Acting.” *Brecht Sourcebook*, edited by Henry Bial and Carol Martin and translated by Eric Bentley. Routledge, 1999, pp. 13-20.

Derrida, Jacques. *Writing and Difference*, translated by Alan Bass. Routledge Classics, 2001.

ALI

Lacan, Jacques. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, edited by Jacques-Alain Miller and translated by Alan Sheridan, revised ed. W. W. Norton, 1998.

McGowan, Todd. "Introduction: From the Imaginary Look to the Real Gaze." *The Real Gaze: Film Theory after Lacan*, State University of New York Press, 2007, pp. 1-20.

Philip, M. NourbeSe. *Zong!*, edited by Setaey Adamu Boateng. Wesleyan University Press, 2008.

CONTRIBUTORS

HAIDER ALI: Haider Ali (he/him) is an Honours English literature major with a minor in Italian language and literature. His primary interests are Renaissance English drama and poetry, French post-war antihumanist theory, and Mediaeval Italian poetry. You can probably find him preaching the (holy) words of Jacques Lacan somewhere.

NATASHA KINNE: Natasha Kinne is a U4 honours English student whose topics of interest include nineteenth-century American literature, women's literature, Herman Melville, religion, and a budding interest in the intersections of literature and medical history. This is her second essay published with the channel.

MILLIE ROBERTS: Millie Roberts is a U2 English Literature major with a minor in Communication Studies, and works as a Staff Writer for the Opinion section of the Bull and Bear Magazine. She spends most of her time subjecting everything to feminist analysis and idolizing Margaret Atwood. She hopes to have a bay window reading nook someday.

FAITH RUETAS: Faith Ruetas is a recent graduate in English literature and computer science. She finds joy in fruit sticker design, Minecraft farm automation, and the digital humanities.

FLORA SITU: Flora Situ (they/she) is an Honours English Literature major who is also completing a minor in Art History. Their specifications currently lie in South/East-Asian Literature, creative nonfiction, Québec theatre, and post-war French antihumanism (deconstruction, to be precise). In a rare moment of free time, they will indulge in their non-academic interests, which are constituted of fibre art and piano.

ANNA CLARE SUNG: AnnaClare Sung is a U2 English Cultural Studies major, with minors in English Literature and Communication Studies. Her current interests include cultural and literary theory—particularly relating to postmodern aesthetics and issues of the middlebrow—as well as contemporary fiction. In her free time, she enjoys taking ballet classes and watching films.

QIAN XUN TIE: Qian Xun is a U2 student in Secondary English at McGill University. She is from Kunming, China.

LUCY ZAVITZ: Lucy Zavitz is a recently graduated English Literature (Honours) student with a minor in Russian literature and culture. Lucy is from Salt Lake City, Utah and loves skiing and hiking in her free time. She is particularly interested in medieval literature, modernist poetry, and 18th century novels of sensibility.

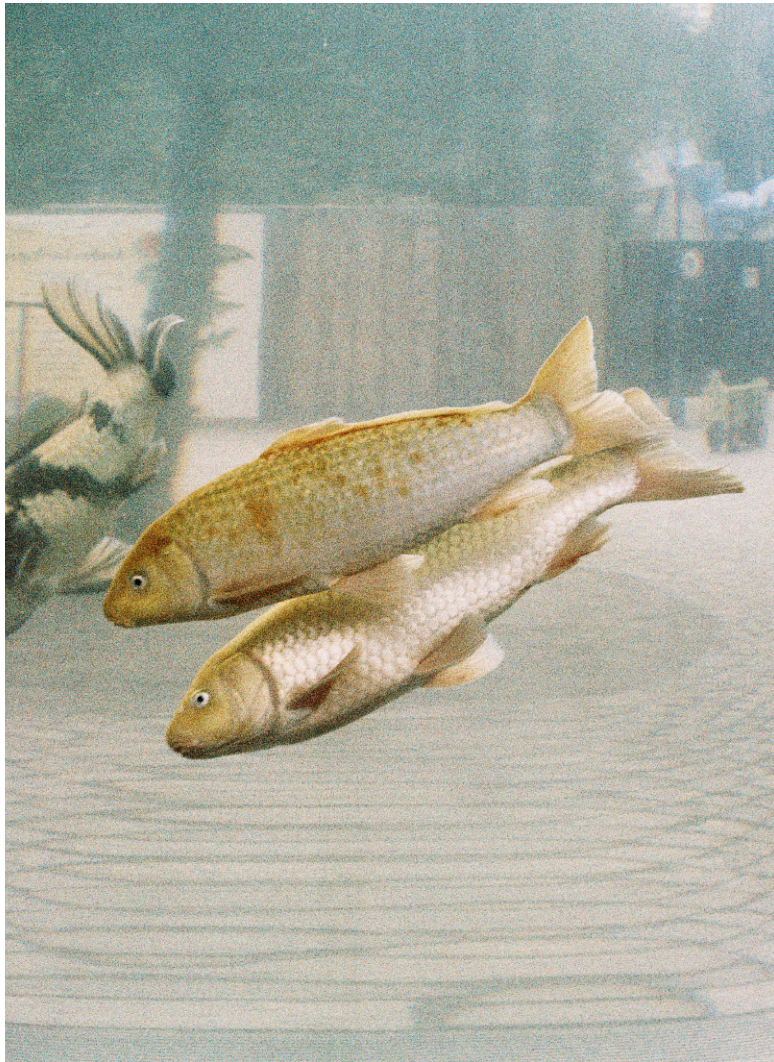
ART CONTRIBUTORS

NATALIE CHANG: Natalie Chang is a U0 student studying political science and chemistry at McGill. She loves reading Margaret Atwood, the font Century Gothic, and drinking absurd amounts of tea (with more modest amounts of oat milk).

AVA ELLIS: I am a U2 Poli Sci and Art History major. My art reflects the aspects of the Caribbean that I want to bring with me as reminders of home.

RAMSEY HEADRICK: Ramsey Headrick (he/him) is a U2 German Studies and Political Science major with a minor in European Literature. He enjoys Russian literature, especially Chekhov and Turgenev. In his free time, Ramsey loves to watch soccer, listen to jazz music, and explore brewpubs with his friends.

YANRAN MOU: Yanran is a 4th year Cognitive Science major with a minor in Russian language. You can find her most often pestering/being pestered by her dog, Myshkin.



two fish
Yanran Mou

The Channel is generously supported by the Art Undergraduate Society and the Department of English Students' Association. Thank you to our sponsors.

