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The Alpha Kappa Phi Review

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PREFACE

An institution puts forth a mission statement to capture its primary purpose, center of attention, and dedication. Lindsey Wilson College shows the depth of its love for education and the student body with its statement, "Every Student, Every Day." The *Alpha Kappa Phi Review* is an extension of this mindset, with an interest in the work of all students at Lindsey Wilson College.

This volume contains a broad range of student essays. These essays span a wide variety of topics and academic disciplines, including detailed analyses of works by major authors and solutions for pressing societal concerns that have major implications on our world today. All of the essays that appear in the *Alpha Kappa Phi Review* have gone through a rigorous peer-review selection and revision process resulting in the inclusion of only works that achieve the highest excellence. All of the essays rely on secondary research and/or extensive textual evidence to support their analyses and claims.

The *Review* has sought to include a wide variety of writing from Lindsey Wilson's student body with this grouping, encompassing the work of sophomores to graduating seniors. This volume includes twelve student essays on a variety of topics from colonialism to historical and political analysis to popular media. The reader will find the essays organized thematically, not alphabetically, into four categories.

The first five essays explore colonialism and its impacts through literary analysis of postcolonial literature. Kassidee Bunch, Rachel Calhoun, and Dawson Oliver each provide an in-depth analysis of Amitav Ghosh's historical fiction *Sea of Poppies* and the impacts of colonialism in British controlled India. Alexandra Wilson explores the depiction of the Creole figure and purity discourses in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Jean Rhys's rewriting of *Jane Eyre*. Finally, Erica Smith explores the rejection of hybrid ethnic and national identity in the context of British Muslims who are frequently interpellated as terrorists given the current crisis with ISIS and the failure of the West to assimilate second-generation immigrants. The next three essays look into the past and explore conflicts of both how we write history and remember and represent political issues. Lane Gentry explores the historiography of the Byzantines, Herbert Grimm explores conflicts of foreign and domestic policy between Soviet leaders, and Samantha Maldonado explores the struggle for transgender rights in a legal dialogue between late Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Antonin Scalia. Gender and trauma are the defining themes of the next three works as Anna Ford, Landon Simmons, and Hannah Brown explore the place of women in *The Matrix* and Western philosophical discourse, the gendered trauma of World War I poets, and the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder in Netflix's *The Queen's Gambit*, respectively. Finally, Aven Sanders, in the essay that concludes this volume, explores theories of justice and morality as seen in the Japanese manga *Death Note* through the framework of social contract theory.

The *Alpha Kappa Phi Review* is devoted to publishing the best student scholarly work that Lindsey Wilson College has to offer. We believe the broad range of topics and arguments within this volume showcase the excellent writing and research skills of Lindsey Wilson's student body.

—Anna Ford, Editor-in-Chief
April 2022

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The editorial board would like to thank the following English, Political Science, and History faculty members for serving as Faculty Reviewers for this volume:

Ms. Mary Baker
Dr. Rachel Carr
Dr. Danielle Cofer
Mr. Caleb Demsey-Richardson
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Each submission to the *Alpha Kappa Phi Review* undergoes an extensive review process in which it is anonymously evaluated by both student editors and faculty.

We are grateful to Dr. Paul Thifault for founding and establishing the *Alpha Kappa Phi Review* in 2015, then the sole undergraduate research journal at Lindsey Wilson College. We are also grateful to Dr. Tip Shanklin for publishing the third volume. Finally, the last six volumes of the *Review* would not have been possible without the mentorship of Dr. Steffens.

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Critical essays in the Humanities, broadly defined as the fields of English, History, Women's and Gender Studies, Philosophy, Theology, Theatre, Film, Political Science, and Art, are welcomed and encouraged from current or recently graduated Lindsey Wilson College students.

For more information, please contact Dr. Karolyn Steffens, Assistant Professor of English and Faculty Editor: steffensk@lindsey.edu.

Breaking Barriers: Amitav Ghosh's Vision for a Unified India in *Sea of Poppies*

Kassidee Bunch

Sea of Poppies is a 2008 postcolonial novel written by Indian writer Amitav Ghosh set in India in 1838 when the subcontinent was still the British Empire's crown jewel under their strict control. Much of the British control over India was due to the division and suppression of its people, a divide and conquer colonial strategy that exploited religion, gender, race, and caste. For much of the novel, Ghosh tells the story of the *Ibis*, which was once a slave ship turned into a transportation vessel for opium for the British East India Company. On board the ship is a diverse population of Indians hoping to shed the struggles of their past lives and identities through the opportunity made possible by the ship's crossing of geographical and national boundaries and subversion of the colonial hierarchies on land. Together, the individuals on the *Ibis* form a tight community that would not have been possible if they were on Indian soil and divided under the strict rules of race, gender, and caste that govern their lives.

In *Sea of Poppies*, Ghosh writes the *Ibis* as a liminal space where anyone can be transformed and find identity outside of the strict system of race and gender. As a result, all can be unified and British colonial power subverted. Through the *Ibis*, Ghosh argues that a future, stronger India not divided through oppressive colonial labels that have been ingrained into its people is possible. Ghosh's argument for a stronger India is made through unity across castes, races, and gender on the *Ibis* as they bond through standing against the injustice perpetuated against them. Ghosh claims that the oppression of forced labels cannot hold their weight because the labels are merely social constructs. Ultimately, Ghosh rewrites the history of Indian colonization to exhibit what the future could hold for India if its people were to unify as one, as they can only do in the liminal space of the Indian Ocean in the 19th century.

However optimistic Ghosh's vision is, his dream for equality in India falls short in the end. Many characters remain oppressed and exploited at the end of the novel, most notably the strong female protagonist Deeti. She is a character who breaks boundaries of caste, race, and gender as she begins a new life that is free of her troubled past. With her new identity, she can forge a new life and gain the trust of many individuals within the diverse ethnic population on board the *Ibis*. Other passengers begin to follow her lead as they face mistreatment at the hands of the British. However, on board the ship, she is left to be sold at the end of the novel as a "coolie" indentured

laborer. Her story leads to the conclusion that this future India is an unattainable fantasy, so long as labels of race and gender are upheld by the collective, even if the labels are fought by individuals.

In the 19th century, the British continued to use Indian labor for their own profit. A good portion of India's exploitation occurred through the British using Indians, particularly the people of lower caste and females, to do the hard labor for British profit of the British East India Company and then directly for the crown. Much of Britain glossed over the mistreatment of their subjects and defended it by arguing that they were not mistreating or using the Indians but were instead rescuing them from poor living conditions and giving them an opportunity to begin a better life. The British claimed they were freeing Indians from their old lives and the accompanying hardships under the strict law of caste and gender in India, when in reality, they were subjugating and oppressing an entire population. European Andrew Perry, who was accused of slave trafficking in India, argued that "His sole intention was to convey them to a more prosperous place, where they might find their livelihoods…his ultimate intention, he maintained, was to get them into service with someone who would both support them and reimburse him for the cost of their acquisition and subsistence" (Major 56). According to the British, it seems that they were India's savior coming to rescue them from "primitive" customs. Within the colonial rhetoric of the time, they were there to keep them from dying under the constraints of their society. Prior to colonization, caste was still described as a looming system that seeped into every crevice of an Indian's life. As Roy says in her preface to *The Annihilation of Caste*, "Caste was implied in people's names, in the way people referred to each other, in the work they did, in the clothes they wore, in the marriages that were arranged, in the language they spoke" (17). Caste was a label imposed upon India's people that controlled what actions were appropriate and which were not for every caste long before the British ruled, with most of the oppression falling on the Dalits, one of the lowest castes.

However, the picture that Britain likes to paint of a "savage" India is not accurate. In reality, the British came to power, took India's existing caste system, and adapted it to their advantage. Every caste under the crown's rule, even the highest and wealthiest, was exploited for Britain's gain. They used the population of lower castes as indentured servants because of their race and low status on the social hierarchy. The British continued to get wealthier off the backs of the lower caste Indians who were unable to climb out of their financial struggle due to their constant exploitation by the British. The treatment of the servants, especially Dalits, was no better than slavery in that many racist prejudices that stemmed from British colonialism persisted, with these

servants still treated as subhuman, especially those who were of a darker complexion or female. The living conditions for the vast majority of Indians forced into indentured servitude and shipped off as "coolie" laborers under the British were so poor that many died on the journey over to servitude and if they lived, they were overworked until they were injured or died.

The injustice and mistreatment of the Indians because of their race, caste, and gender can certainly be seen in Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*. The English captain of the *Ibis* beat, starved, and overworked those who chose to become indentured servants. They justify the empire's mistreatment of the servants by exclaiming, "While you are on the *Ibis* and while she is at sea, I am your fate, your providence, your lawgiver…there is no better keeper of the law than submission and obedience. In that respect, this ship is no different from your own homes and villages" (Ghosh 394). This fictional situation is a metaphor for the real hardships that the colonized faced at the hands of the British Empire—both back in colonial India and on ships like the *Ibis* that transport indentured laborers to a life on plantations. The horrors of what occurred on many slave ships like the *Ibis* will forever be ingrained into Indian minds because of how brutal the conditions were for their people. Ghosh interrogates the historical legacy of such divisions and exploitations within Indian society, a system of caste, racial, and gendered difference that persists today and challenges attempts to unify India in a postcolonial present.

The Faults of Racial Stereotypes

The British justified their grotesque treatment of their colonized subjects by arguing that the castes made up of minorities were inferior to the purity of the white race. The hierarchy of the caste system and the powerful racism that undergirds it were both effective in keeping the population oppressed and powerless to do anything to stop their exploitation. There was a genuine belief across the British that, "They were, for the most part, convinced of an essential difference between British and Indian that justified indefinite control of political power by a 'superior race'" (Metcalf and Metcalf 94). As discussed by Metcalf and Metcalf, a very large portion of Britain's control was based on the 18th and 19th century social Darwinist, racist belief that there were differences in the biology of whites and Indians that made the white race scientifically superior overall. Therefore, they should have the ability to control and mistreat their subjects. Britain's mistreatment intensifies the struggle of living for those who are already in a lower caste in Indian society.

Given that Britain was able to keep India as their crown jewel and their people as essentially enslaved for such an extended time, it is no question that their tactic to use labels of race and caste as tools of mass oppression and division was effective. With that being said, there were certainly flaws in this type of categorical thinking, which is why the empire eventually crumbled in the 20th century. These flaws become very clear when *Sea of Poppies* is put in conversation with critical race theory.

Critical race theory is a school of thought whose core belief is that society and its laws function in a way that holds minorities at a structural disadvantage, making it difficult to achieve equality in a white supremacist society. The disadvantages create systemic racism that is built on a belief that people of color are psychologically, biologically, or anatomically inferior to the white race and therefore do not deserve the same opportunities or equality. It should also be noted that not only do believers of this inherent racism feel as though minorities should not receive the same equal rights and fair treatment, but they also believe that they should be punished for who they are. This racist thinking is a recurring theme that Ghosh illustrates in *Sea of Poppies*, specifically with the character of Kalua. Kalua is a Dalit who is seen as subhuman. As a result, he receives much of the brunt of the colonizer's mistreatment but also the racism from his own Indian countrymen who discriminate against him based on the caste system.

Perhaps the lines that best describe exactly what Kalua and so many other Dalits faced at the hands of the British come closer to the end. In a heart-wrenching scene in which Kalua is getting beaten for helping Deeti, his wife, escape sexual assault, Kalua hears his abuser scream, "'You'll be dead before I'm done with you'" (Ghosh 474). Ghosh goes on to write that "Kalua heard him clearly, through the buzzing in his head, and he asked, in a whisper, 'Malik— what have I ever done to you?' The question further enraged Bhyro Singh. 'Done?' He said. 'Isn't it enough that you are what you are?'" (474). In this scene, Ghosh makes it explicit that Kalua is a victim of a system that has enslaved and dehumanized him because he is not white, and white is held above all. The core reason that he is getting beaten is because he is a dark-skinned Dalit. When read this way, it becomes a ridiculous situation because Bhryo Singh, and anyone like him, are foolish to believe that they are superior to anyone for their race, especially when they act so savagely. Ghosh is making Bhryo Singh seem ridiculous purposefully to illustrate a central tenet of critical race theory: "…the 'social construction' thesis holds that race and races are products of social thought and relations. Not objective, inherent, or fixed, they correspond to no biological or genetic reality;

rather, races are categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient" (Delgado 7). Delgado argues that critical race theory's foundational idea is that all races are concepts that are defined through human social interaction, rather than a fixed biology. Races may look different and have different customs or ways of speaking, but they are all equal because they are human beings. There are no differences found that are grounds for creating a hierarchy of races. Race is merely a label that is used to create divides between human beings.

Ghosh acknowledges the detriment that the label of race has had on India's history through scenes such as Kalua's beating. He recognizes labeling race as a very powerful force that can tear societies apart. He also believes, much like contemporary critical race theorists, that labels like race are very fragile because they hold no essential truth but are instead social and cultural constructions. As a result, Ghosh uses *Sea of Poppies* to exhibit how these labels cannot hold a population under oppression forever. For instance, the characters realize on the *Ibis* that they had more in common than not and forged close relationships. Relationships among the diverse population are seen many times through the *Ibis*'s unique community because the caste system is not in play onboard the ship. Caste no longer defined who an individual was. High caste did not improve how Indians on the ship would be living for the journey and low castes did not make their mistreatment worse. They were all on board a ship for one reason: to be sold and exploited.

To make the constructed nature of the racial hierarchy explicit, Ghosh represents the *Ibis* as a place of liminality and unity among the very diverse group of individuals. For example, Paulette exemplifies that diversity well as a character. She is a white, French woman with all the looks of a "proper" young lady, but she grew up among Indians in a village. Paulette adopted their customs, specifically their way of dress, as a child. She still prefers the Indian way of living as an adult despite her uncle's best efforts to change them. Paulette eventually finds herself on the *Ibis* in disguise after she snuck onboard. Once Deeti finds out she is technically of a very high standing in society, she asks Paulette whys she chooses to associate with individuals of a nonwhite race and lower castes to which Paulette responds, "On a boat of pilgrims, no one can lose caste and everyone is the same…from now on, and forever afterwards, we will all be ship siblings…There'll be no differences between us" (Ghosh 348). The *Ibis* was a ship that was so extraordinary because it held the power to transform people out of their past lives into someone who just simply existed. Once passengers step foot on the ship, their old labels did not have power to oppress or divide them anymore. Ghosh is arguing that because race is only in name, the systemic oppression and division

made possible by the label cannot hold its power permanently when the collective population is unified.

Critical race theory also suggests that racial hierarchy is a false concept because there is no specific race that has been discriminated against throughout all of history. The oppressed race will always change given the societal context at the time: "Critical writers in law, as well as social science, have drawn attention to the ways the dominant society racializes different minority groups at different times, in response to shifting needs such as the labor market" (Delgado 8). Ghosh uses this theory in the novel and paints Britain as financially dependent on India despite the British discriminating against them. Mr. Burnham, who is very rich because of India's opium production, brings their reliance on India to light in a conversation debating the morals of opium in India. When asked about the morality of their situation, he turns to the ways that opium has benefited the British exclaiming that, "…the company's annual gains from opium are almost equal to the entire revenue of your own country…Do you imagine that British rule would be possible in this impoverished land if it were not for this source of wealth?" (Ghosh 113). Britain could never have been such a massive power in India if it were not for the labor being done in the opium fields by Indians. The British needed their colonized Indians to harvest the opium, which is the labor that Delgado is mentioning in his work, or their rule would have crumbled.

The empire was aware they had to keep Indian workers under their control. The most effective way to oppress them at the time was through language. The British used the label of a "savage" and "dark" race who deserved to be controlled to continue to keep the Indian workers oppressed. More specifically, the captain of the *Ibis* stereotypes the Indians as a weak, sinful race stating that they, "Are fools, sir, who imagine that everyone who touches a pipe is condemned instantly to wither away in a smoke- filled den…There are some, of course, who know with their first taste that they will leave that smoky paradise- those are the true addicts and they are born, not made" (Ghosh 424). He is not considering that the British East India Company is the sole reason India has an opium crisis because they began to force them to harvest it. Instead, the captain is labeling Indians as a race that were born to be inferior in will power and morals because they are addicted to opium. Indians are seen as barbarians who do not wish to help themselves and want nothing more than to get high and waste away in a den. Therefore, their race deserves to be punished.

The stereotype of an uncontrollable addict seems to find its proof in a character named Ah Fatt, a lower caste opium addict who was imprisoned and forced onto the *Ibis* to be sold. The stewards on the ship know that Ah Fatt is an addict, and they see how far he is willing to go for a small amount of opium as a cruel game to entertain themselves. Ah Fatt remarks desperately that "'For opium, sir'…. 'man can do anything'" (Ghosh 445). The stewards take the word "anything" literally and begin to pressure him into urinating on his cellmate and only friend, Neel. Ah Fatt does not hesitate to do so and, "In a fury of impatience, he sucked in his stomach and pushed his pajamas down to his knees…closing his eyes, Ah Fatt turned his face to the sky and squeezed out a thin trickle of urine over Neel" (Ghosh 446). In Britain's eyes, Ah Fatt reinforces the label of a "savage" race and their justification to enslave and mistreat people like him. The steward's experiment on Ah Fatt is also detailing how critical race theory believes that "dominant society often casts minority groups against one another in detriment of both" (Delgado 71). By dividing them, none of the blame is placed on the "superior" white race for tearing apart the nation. The blame is solely on the Indians because they are seen as brutal for turning against their own race, which is what it seems Ah Fatt is doing. He must be a savage because only savages could turn on a close friend for something as meaningless as drugs. Of course, he would not be in this situation if the stewards had not brought him into it or if Britain had not begun to make opium the main source of wealth for India through colonization in the first place.

However, Ghosh also agrees with critical race theory's belief that the label of a barbaric, inferior race is a false and socially constructed concept in Ah Fatt. He displays that fragility by complicating Ah Fatt's character. In the scene previously discussed, Ah Fatt seems like an addict who turns on his fellow Indians and nothing more. However, he contradicts the idea that the British have of him because of his background. Yes, Ah Fatt was in a lower caste when the British entered India, but he did not start there. In fact, he is smarter than most of his captors. Ah Fatt's father prided himself on his children being well educated about not only their place of origin, but the west as well. The discrimination his father faced when trying to get him into school did not stop him: "If schools refused to accept the illegitimate son of a boatwoman, then he would hire special tutors, to teach him reading and penmanship, in Chinese and English" (Ghosh 409). Ghosh is using Ah Fatt's education to further demonstrate that race holds no inherent, biological meaning on who is higher and who is lower in society. Ah Fatt is at the bottom of society in the novel not because

he is stupid or subhuman. He is at the bottom because his colonizers have put him there based on illegitimate claims of his race.

Ghosh also uses the relationship between Ah Fatt and Neel to display the unity that is possible when labels are disregarded. Despite what Ah Fatt does to Neel in hopes of receiving opium, they are extremely close. They are bonded because they are all each other have after being ripped from their lives and imprisoned. After learning that he will be forced on the *Ibis*, Neel is disgusted that he must be in such proximity to Ah Fatt. However, one of his guards informs him, "…you will have to travel with him to your jail across the black water. He is all you have, your caste, your family, your friend; neither brother nor wife nor son will ever be as close to you as he will" (Ghosh 310). Their unique bond is a shock to the system because Neel is a Raj, or a member of Indian high society. Neel had all the wealth and material goods that he could want before his imprisonment. On the other hand, Ah Fatt was living in an opium den with not a dollar to his name. Yet through their arrests, they found each other. In the end, they forge a brotherhood and care for each other very much. They hold onto their humanity and protect one another despite the British wanting them to turn against each other for their enjoyment. Even after Ah Fatt urinates on Neel, they stay by the other's side. Their old caste means nothing in the wake of their friendship, once again proving the recurrent theme that labels are not reality in the end.

The type of bond that Ghosh creates between Ah Fatt and Neel coincides with Derrick Bell's founding work in critical race theory. To break systemic racism, one must make: "…something out of nothing. Carving out a humanity for oneself with absolutely nothing to help-save imagination, will, and unbelievable strength and courage…while firmly believing in, knowing how only they could know, the fact that all those odds are stacked against them" (Bell 198). Ghosh exhibits this approach as effective because Ah Fatt and Neel do know they are at a disadvantage in their lives in the hands of colonizers. However, they choose to make the best of their situation and hold on to their humanity and strength to smash the labels they were given and become unified. They are rewarded for their courage, and both escape the boat at the end of the novel. Thus, they prove to their oppressors once and for all that their mass tool of oppression holds no weight when the collective decides to work together.

Deeti: A "Third- World Woman"

Ghosh is also keenly aware of other circumstances that would intensify the suffocating oppression the Indians faced, one of these being gender. Ghosh displays the sexist tendencies of

the society in *Sea of Poppies* very blatantly. There is not a female character in the novel that is not mistreated in some form or fashion because women were held in a lesser light than men at this time. There was a strong belief at the time, "…that the female results from some defect, some imperfection in the developmental process. Believing male biology to be a scientific fact…" (Tauna IX). However, no individual was as mistreated and oppressed as women of color in Indian society. Feminist theory has an explanation for why the woman of color faces such hardships in society: "Such theory postulates the "third- world woman" as victim per excellence- the forgotten casualty of both imperial ideology, and native and foreign patriarchies" (Gandhi 471). These women in the context of *Sea of* Poppies would be an Indian woman because she is under the oppression of the empire that applies to all colonized subjects as well as the strict gender hierarchy that India already had in place. Ghosh imagines a perfect example of the "third-world woman" through one of his main characters: Deeti.

Deeti is obviously a victim of colonialism as the British have taken almost everything from her family. She remembers her childhood as a happy one because it was before the peak of the empire. Poppies were a luxury then and Indians were not worked to death to produce opium yet. She turns to these memories as she looks at the house that she shares with her husband and her daughter live in: "Their hut, which was just visible in the distance…looked like a tiny raft, floating upon a river of poppies. The hut's roof was urgently in need of repairs, but in this age of flowers, thatch was not easy to come by…with the sahibs forcing everyone to grow poppy, no one had thatch to spare" (Ghosh 27). Not only had the British taken away her financial means to survive by forcing her and her fellow Indians to harvest poppies for very little, but they had also taken away her husband. Deeti's husband fell victim to addiction and is now a daily opium user due to the increase of the substance since the British came to rule. Deeti is left to work in the fields, take care of her child, and upkeep her home all on her own. Obviously, colonization has led to severe oppression and inequality for Deeti as an Indian citizen. The financial and emotional hardships that have been forced on her as a subject of Britain is not where her problems end.

Deeti also faces problems as a woman of lower caste in India's hierarchy. Once her husband becomes severely injured due to exhaustion in the opium factory, she has very limited options due to her gender. As she is observing her husband dying in their shack, her brother-in-law, Chandan Singh, gives her what seems to be her only option:

> "You know very well how your daughter was conceived—why pretend? You know that you would be childless today if not for me…wouldn't it be best for you to do willingly now what you did before without your knowledge? …if you conceive a son while he is still living, he will be his father's rightful heir…but you know yourself that as things stand now, my brother's land and his house will become mine on his death…When I become master of this house, how will you get by except at my pleasure?" (Ghosh 154)

The toxic patriarchy that exists in Indian society is explicit in Singh's speech. First, it is clear in Singh's proposition that Deeti's daughter, Kabutri, is not her husband's but instead Chandan Singh's. Deeti was high on opium on her wedding night and passed out as a result. She does not remember having sex at all that night leading to the conclusion that she was raped by her brother-in-law since she did not give consent. Deeti's rape is talked about very nonchalantly by everyone who knows about it. Even Deeti herself never sees the full issue with what has happened to her because she was never taught that her body belonged to her. Her sexual assault is never punished because she is unable to report the crime. Even if she was able to report it, she would not win given that it would be her word against his and the man always took precedence over the woman in 19th century India.

Second, it is explicit that a woman's survival in this society depended on the man. Deeti must submit to Chandan Singh's desire to have sex and hopefully conceive a son, so her home and land is not taken from her. In other words, her fate rests in the hands of a man who has raped her once before and a son that does not even exist yet. The society she lives in values hypothetical males over any woman. Deeti does not like her option to sleep with Singh as a method of survival for her and her daughter, Kabutri. She believes that once her husband is dead, the best option she has will be to burn to death in the fire on her husband's pyre. She decides that it is: "…better by far to die a celebrated death than to be dependent on Chandan Singh, or even return to her own village, to live out her days as a shameful burden on her brother…" (Ghosh 155). Once Deeti is dead, Kabutri will be taken in as an orphan by her uncle, Deeti's brother, and will be well taken care of which is more than Deeti would ever be able to accomplish as a single mother. She knows that life would only continue to be a struggle for a mother and daughter on their own in Indian society and death seems to be the only alternative to improve the future. Ghosh is sending one clear message through his writing: In this Indian society, women were not valued. They were worth much more dead than they were alive.

Although Deeti tries, she does not burn to death in the pyre. Kalua pulls her from the flames, and they escape on the river together. As she floats on the raft in the river, she describes a rebirth as though, "…she had shed the body of the old Deeti, with the burden of its karma…and was free now to create a new destiny as she willed" (Ghosh 175). Ghosh is exhibiting the raft as another vessel on water that allows individuals to shed their past labels to create new identities. The burdens and rules that come with being an Indian woman no longer have their hold on Deeti or her decisions once she is on the raft. She is also able to break free of strict caste rules because Kalua and Deeti can join in marriage on the water despite Kalua being an untouchable. To make the marriage official, Deeti:

> strung the flowers together to make two garlands: one she gave to him, and the other she took herself, lifting it up above his head and slipping it around his neck. Now he too knew what to do and when the exchange of garlands had bound them together, they sat for awhile…then she crept into his arms again and was swept into the embracing warmth of his body… (Ghosh 176)

Their ceremony is by no means a traditional wedding that would take place on land, but it is valid all the same because the rules of marriage do not apply on the river. The bond between Deeti and Kalua is an unthinkable relationship on land, but the river is a place of liminality. They are no longer restricted to marrying in their caste anymore, making them an option to each other. They can make their own customs and traditions. One of these traditions is consummating their marriage on the water. Through the consummation, there is a sense of finality and permanence, like her life has finally started to change. Their reality has officially shifted on the water in a way that would never have been allowed under any other circumstances but none of that matters now. The phenomenon of their union happening further proves that neither gender, race, nor caste is truly based on any factual evidence since it can be disregarded so easily.

Their intimate experience can also be seen as a moment of realization for Deeti. Feminist theorist Audre Lorde describes the erotic as, "A measure between the beginnings of our sense of self and the chaos of our strongest feelings. It is an internal sense of satisfaction to which, once we have experienced it, we know we can aspire. For having experienced the full depth of sensuality and recognizing its power, in honor and self- respect we can require no less of ourselves" (189). Deeti finds power in her newfound sexual identity she has gained from transforming out of her

traditional roles on the water. From that moment on, she becomes a powerful force and a fierce leader of the unique community onboard the *Ibis*.

No one steps up to take on the role of an advocate on board the *Ibis* quite like Deeti. She is the one who fights for everyone's fair treatment with no regard to their labels. The most serious case is that of Munia and Jodu when they are both to be punished for interacting since Jodu is Muslim and Munia is Hindu. At first, the reader sees Jodu's punishment in the form of a beating: "The back of the subedar's hand slammed into the other side of his face, knocking the air from his lungs, blowing his cheek out…. sending sprawling on the deck. You cut- prick lascar- where did you get the balls to go sniffing after our girls?" (Ghosh 456). After Munia is carried away screaming and Paulette asks her for help, "It passed through Deeti's mind to say no, this wasn't her burden, she wasn't really everyone's bhauji and couldn't be expected to fight everyone's battle. But then she thought of Munia, all alone…and her body rose as of itself" (Ghosh 458). Ghosh is emphasizing Deeti's character development through her bravery and advocacy in this situation. At the beginning of the book, Deeti is a subdued, quiet woman so that she never disrupts the systemic labels that have been forced upon her. After her transformation out of her caste and traditional gender roles, she can become someone who advocates for the changes that will create equality for those onboard. The strength it takes for her to begin the movement for change further proves that the stereotype of women as meek and worthless is not true. She also decides in that moment on the deck that everyone must unify if they are to have any chance of undermining the power the British have over them, much like Derrick Bell stated in his work.

The power of the erotic that Deeti discovers also leads to her pregnancy. The baby is conceived through the bond of Deeti and Kalua. Since their marriage was forged on the liminality of the river between Indians of different castes, it did not abide by the categorization of the British and was detrimental to their power. The baby's unique identity alone makes them a disruption to the "perfect" system of oppression that the British had meticulously created because, "The colonial politics of exclusion was contingent on constructing categories. Colonial control was predicated on identifying …which children could become citizens rather than subjects, designating who were legitimate progeny and who were not" (Stoler 482). The baby will not be born in India so they will never know the struggles of surviving under colonial rule and their constrictive categories. Even if the baby was born in India under the strict rules for race and caste, they could never fit into just one because of their parental lineage. Ghosh writes the pregnancy as something that is life-altering

because the British cannot use their false labels as a tool for oppression in this instance, "It was as if her belly were the sea, and the child a vessel, sailing towards its own destiny" (Ghosh 449). They will pave their own way in the world that is free of the injustice their mother and father once knew.

The Future of India

Deeti's baby and the fluidity of identity that is allowed by the liminality on water is proof that the historical circumstances of India do not have to be permanent. Ghosh argues that there is hope for the future of India and it lies in the new generation's ability to fight for the unity of all populations since they are not burdened with the same identity categories that have made lives so difficult in the past. The British will not have the power to oppress or divide anymore if all socially constructed superficial differences of race and caste are put aside. Ghosh believes there is hope for a better India and the fight to achieve it is not so insurmountable after all.

The ending that Ghosh portrays is undoubtedly optimistic. In the end, there were no labels too oppressive or beatings too severe that the community onboard the *Ibis* could not overcome in some manner. The ending proves that Ghosh has true hope for a new India founded on the idea of unity and equality. He cannot be discredited for his vision as everything he has argued in his novel is factual and proven through the theories discussed previously. While he acknowledges that the labels of caste, race, and gender forced onto India are an effective tool to use to sustain power, he also realizes that they can be overcome with effort from the oppressed masses. Again, the systemic control aided by these divisions cannot hold indefinitely because none of them are based in reality. Ghosh has faith that India will realize the error in its labels.

Many critics argue the same as Ghosh. They believe that individuals on board the *Ibis* have changed the future forever because of their rebellion against past confinements. For instance, literary critic Gangopadhay focuses on the effects of the unique bonds formed stating:

> Their relationship is now the jahaji nata (which may be translated as a "relationship of the ship"), one forged by the experience of crossing turbulent seas together. While they are brought together by their respective sufferings…that suffering brings with it the scope to create something anew…This sentiment is echoed by Paulette when she tells Deeti that "From now on, and forever afterwards, we will all be ship- siblings- jahazbhias and jahazbehens" (60)

It would be impossible not to acknowledge that there are certain developments to the system that are seen by the end of the novel. Every member onboard the *Ibis* will see their lives altered

permanently. However, these changes are not quite as optimistic or large as Ghosh or Gangopadhay would argue.

Deeti's ending in *Sea of Poppies* is hopeful because she achieved what was nearly impossible at the time. She was a lower-caste Indian woman who escaped the exploitation of her body by Singh and made the choice of her own free will to marry Kalua. At the end of the novel, it seems her pregnancy will lead her into the next bright chapter of her future and possibly India's future as well. However, Deeti's story does not end as cheerfully as it seems on the surface. She escapes sexual assault as a woman of color but despite Ghosh's wishes for a present India where this type of victory for women would be common, there are many negative parallels that can be drawn from the setting of the novel to present day. The sexual exploitation and harassment of Indian women continues to be extreme. In fact, "According to the National Crime Records Bureau, more than four Untouchable women are raped by Touchable…In 2012 alone, the year of the Delhi gang-rape and murder, 1,574 Dalit women were raped (the rule of thumb is that only 10 per cent of rapes or other crimes against Dalits are ever reported)" (Roy 21). The future of India has not held what Ghosh dreamed of. India received independence from the British empire in 1947 but the crimes against lower castes and women are still present in the country. The only difference is now instead of the British committing the crimes, most of them are committed by the people of India. These statistics show that while Britain certainly is to blame for atrocious acts against Indians in the era of colonial rule, the systemic sexism and racism that were the foundations for these acts are still present in the modern day. The unity and equality that Ghosh deemed possible for his people is still just a vision.

That vision is not yet a reality because of the circumstances of India's politics on human rights. The judicial system in India refuses to admit that they are facing high rates of violent crimes against lower castes due to the caste system itself. B.R. Ambedkar, who held a Ph.D. in law, gave a speech in 1936 for an audience that was made of mostly high caste citizens. On the topic of the injustices that were already prevalent then, he stated, "If the fundamental rights are opposed by the community, no law, no parliament, no judiciary can guarantee them in the real sense of the word…what is the use of fundamental rights to the Negro in America, to the Jews in Germany and to the Untouchables in India? As Burke said, there is no method found for punishing the multitude" (Roy 21). Ambedkar is arguing that while there are many lawyers and judicial members that understand that India has the same problems of injustice as it did during colonial rule, they do not

see how there is much to be done about them. Lawmakers believe that the population would not follow any law put in place to create equality, so why should they try? While there are many that critique the system for not prioritizing human rights, they are not moving towards any change because they feel as though nothing can truly be done to help. Therefore, they are contributing to the problem that they are criticizing.

This type of thinking has bled over into the 21st century as well. While many prestigious Indian scholars understand and write about the violent crimes that continue to occur, they ignore caste as being a cause for these crimes. Roy states, "In the current debates about identity and justice, growth and development, for many…caste is at best a topic, a. subheading, and quite often, just a footnote…the progressive and left-leaning Indians intelligentsia has made seeing caste even harder" (23). There is a continued denial across India of what the true causes of the continued injustices upon its people are by those who say they wish to create change. If the denial continues, there will never be equality in India like Ghosh creates through the *Ibis* and his characters. If the labels of caste, race, and gender are held in place because there is a refusal to acknowledge that they are part of the problem, there will always be injustice upon those that are labeled inferior.

If continued injustice is the case, the surface-level optimism at the end of *Sea of Poppies* will be all India ever has. There are small victories won in India today that resemble those in the novel which are extremely important to the individuals who are lucky enough to live them in a prejudiced society. However, they are small compared to the masses who are still facing violence and oppression because of how they are labeled in the hierarchy. For example, as a result of the lack of power that oppressive labels have on the *Ibis*, there are a select few that escape. In the light provided by a strike of lightning, "A longboat seems to leap out at Zachary, from the crest of a wave…the faces of the five men who were in it could clearly be seen. Serang Ali was at the rudder, and the other four were huddled in its middle- Jodu, Neel, Ah Fatt and Kalua" (Ghosh 496). While their escape is excellent for the men on the lifeboat, there are problems with the victory. Out of the whole subcontinent of India, it is only these four men that escape British rule in the novel. These four are simply not enough to turn the tide on any amount of mass injustice that Ghosh is pointing out through the novel. There are also no women who escape onto the boat leading to the conclusion that there have been very few real victories for them by the end. It has been established that Deeti was capable of rebelling against the labels that caused her suffering in life, but she is only one

woman. For the collective women of India who are mistreated every day, there have been no improvements at all.

It is also important to note that Deeti's hope for the future is naïve. While her baby is a disruption to the system, it comes into question just how much those on the *Ibis* will change anything for the long term, especially once the ship reaches shore. There is no doubt that their existence alone provides evidence that the system of labels could crumble given the right circumstances. Yet, the baby is still in Deeti's body, and she does not escape the *Ibis*. Kalua left Deeti on the boat to be sold into indentured servitude once the ship hits land. Her baby will meet the same fate once it is born, thus reinforcing the ideas of critical race theory that small individual change is not enough. There must be a collective effort for any real change to occur.

Sea of Poppies is a brilliant novel that displays the fragility of false labels which have had power over India for centuries throughout the tale of rebellion and victories for those who found themselves on the *Ibis*. Ghosh does an extraordinary job of showcasing the oppression of India's people that continues to be a problem in the present day as well as bringing awareness to the injustices that have plagued India since before colonial times. He is correct in his argument that it is possible to rebel against the oppression created by the social hierarchy that is catalyzed by labels throughout the novel. However, *Sea of Poppies'* optimism should be taken with a grain of salt. In the end, there is no amount of individualistic success that can result in Ghosh's vision for a better India. There must be an acknowledgment by the masses of India that they have major issues due to the hierarchies created by labels. This acknowledgment will start the societal changes needed to create a life free of oppression and mistreatment for Indians. Only then will Ghosh's shining vision for a unified future India be possible.

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Breaking the Shackles of Colonialism and Caste:
An Analysis of Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*

Rachel Calhoun

Sea of Poppies by Amitav Ghosh tells the story of various characters that come from different walks of life and their journey on board the *Ibis*, a former slave ship belonging to the British. This paper will analyze the book *Sea of Poppies* in relation to its historical context. The historical context of the book's setting in 1838 India will be examined in connection to the 1839 Opium War and its relationship with the exploitation of India's caste system. The historical context of 2008, the year the book was published, will also be examined in its relation to the partitioning of India and ongoing caste system injustices. To tie the historical context and the book together, I will focus not only on how Ghosh represents the power of colonialism and the caste system, but also how he represents opposition to these powers in a historical realist novel. In *Sea of Poppies*, Amitav Ghosh successfully contends that the caste system in India is equally as oppressive as colonialism, as it pertains to British rule in India in the 19th century and India in the 20th/21st century. Ghosh does this by incorporating Mr. Crowle (colonialism), who is the British first mate on the Ibis, and Bhyro Singh (caste system), who is an Indian overseer on the Ibis, into the story as embodiments of these two forms of oppression in India. The characters of Neel and Ah Fatt have a relationship that embodies an alternative and resistance to these oppressive systems that depend on dividing people along race and caste-based lines. Ultimately, Ghosh illuminates the possibility of change in 21st century Indian society by presenting a way to unify the country and collectively oppose an oppressive system that continues to struggle with the legacy of imperialism, and he does this by incorporating characters that reenact this struggle in 19th century India.

The book, set in 1838, takes place between Calcutta, India, the Chinese port city of Canton, and the Indian Ocean. This setting is important because it is before two major crises: the 1839 Opium War and the official annexation of India into the British Empire. However, the British and Chinese war on opium was not an isolated incident. The conflict leading up to this war dates back to 1729, when China first banned opium imports from the British East India Company, who had a port in Canton, China. Despite the ban on opium imports, British merchants stockpiled and produced opium in India for illegal imports with the help of corrupt Chinese officials. The pumping of opium into China led to a devastating addiction crisis among Chinese citizens and the collapse

of their economy. Lin Zexu describes the collective anger about this in his *Letter to Queen Victoria* in 1839 by saying, "Consequently there are those who smuggle opium to seduce the Chinese people and so cause the spread of the poison to all provinces. Such persons who only care to profit themselves, and disregard their harm to others, are not tolerated by the laws of heaven and are unanimously hated by human beings."[1] Because of this spread of addiction among the provinces of China, the Chinese emperor took it upon himself to flush 20,283 chests of opium out to sea, triggering the start of the Opium War.[2]

While this was happening, Indians, who had been under the British East India Company's rule since 1757, and their caste system were being exploited by Britain in order to make the flow of opium possible. Indians who were a part of the lowest castes, the Shudras and the Dalits, produced and maintained the poppy plants that were then turned into opium. It was produced at such a scale that Indians were no longer able to grow edible crops, resulting in starvation throughout India. At one point, under the control of Governor General Warren Hastings of the Company, the states of Patna and Bihar were restricted to only growing opium.[3] Because of this, neighboring provinces were left with the responsibility of providing these states with food and crops.[4] By the late 18th century, poppy cultivation reached a quarter of a million acres, and it only grew from there.[5] This was enforced by Indians of a higher caste and the British East India Company on Indians of lower castes. The higher castes, mainly Rajputs and Brahmans, were recruited or appointed to serve the British East India Company Raj as sepoys or as raja, which allowed for further exploitation at the hands of the British.[6] Indian soldiers, or sepoys, served the British East India Company with loyalty because of the regular pay and the expected continuation of this pay once they retired.[7] However, there was no possibility that any sepoy could rise in ranks of the "officer corps" because those positions were secured only for Europeans.[8] Rajas were

[1] Lin Zexu, *Letters to Queen Victoria*, 1839.
[2] Elizabeth Tapscott, "India Lectures: British Opium Trade," HIST 4353: History & Literature of Empire (class lecture at Lindsey Wilson College, Columbia, KY, March, 2021.)
[3] Thomas Dormandy, *Opium: Reality's Dark Dream* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), page 65.
[4] Dormandy, *Opium: Reality's Dark Dream,* page 65.
[5] Dormandy, *Opium: Reality's Dark Dream,* page 65.
[6] Barbara Metcalf and Thomas Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), page 61.
[7] Metcalf and Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India*, page 62.
[8] Metcalf and Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India*, page 62.

bought and bribed by the Company to ensure successful outcomes in any given situation.[9] The setting of the book allows Ghosh to explicitly depict characters that have been exploited by British rule in both China and India, no matter their ranking in societal hierarchies.

Although the book takes place in 1838 India and China, Ghosh wrote the book in Kolkata (formerly Calcutta), India in 2008. This year is significant because India was undergoing drastic change to their government after they gained independence from the British in 1947, which was 350 years after they first fell under Britain's influence and eventual control. The new independent India was modelled to be a "democratic land, with universal suffrage and freedom of press and speech," and to help ensure this, the Indian Congress made decisions that would lessen the discrimination of groups in the Caste system such as the Dalits, or "untouchables."[10] One attempt that the Congress made to lessen discrimination was appointing a Dalit by the name of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar to chair the drafting committee for the new Indian constitution.[11] This constitution, on paper, guaranteed equal rights to everyone and most importantly, reserved seats in legislation for untouchables. [12] However, those of lower castes were not the only ones that were being discriminated against, Indians of both Hindu and Muslim religions were being met with hatred and violence.

As a result of India gaining independence and self-governance, it was partitioned into two different countries in 1947: Pakistan, located in the former Northwest India, and India. It is important to highlight that before this partitioning, India was filled with hundreds of millions of people who were vastly different among cultural and religious lines, as Ghosh shows throughout the entirety of his book with every character we encounter. It is important to keep this in mind because after the partitioning, the once religiously and culturally tolerable nonviolent India no longer existed. Hinduism and Islam were the primary religions practiced in India, but both of these religions came with many different denominations. Despite this, the multicultural and diverse population of the Indian subcontinent lived together with no religious lines drawn. Many Muslims opposed any partition of the Indian subcontinent, seeing no benefit of two separate states, and strived for unity and understanding between different religious groups.[13] A partitioning was what

[9] Dormandy, *Opium: Reality's Dark Dream*, page 64.
[10] Metcalf and Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India*, page 232
[11] Metcalf and Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India*, page 232.
[12] Metcalf and Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India*, page 232.
[13] Metcalf and Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India*, page 208.

the Muslim League political party wanted, however, and when the sub-continent was partitioned, the League thought that peace would "prevail."[14]

A year before Pakistan and India went to war with each other, Indira Gandhi became the second prime minister of India in 1964, when she further exploited Indians in the lower castes. Gandhi, wanting to curb the poverty which had resulted from overpopulation, adopted a policy that forced sterilization on the lower castes to slow down the population growth. Even though the Indian constitution guaranteed equal treatment and opportunity, regardless of caste or gender in 1950, Gandhi was still able to introduce a policy that undermined this constitutional right and continued to set back any progress that could have been made with the caste system.

However, once the Indian sub-continent was split into Muslim-dominated Pakistan and Hindu-dominated India, religious and ethnic tensions grew rapidly and violence became greater which then led to India and Pakistan going to war with each other in 1965.[15] During the India-Pakistan war of 1965, these two nations were fighting over the territory of Kashmir that borders both India and Pakistan.[16] Things intensified when the Pakistani Army attempted to forcibly take over Kashmir, but then failed to do so.[17] As a result of the ending of this war, the country of Bangladesh was created in 1971 in the former Northeast India, where Ghosh placed the majority of the action in *Sea of Poppies*. A prime example of the violence taking place during the rise of Hindu nationalism and strong tensions between Muslims and Hindus is the 1992 attack on the Ayodhya Mosque. On December 6, 1992, Hindu karsevaks, or volunteer workers, closed in on the Ayodhya Mosque in Northern India and tore it down "brick by brick."[18] While this was taking place, thirteen Muslims were murdered with pickaxes and as a result of this attack, "anti-Muslim riots spread throughout India" that killed around 1,000 people who were primarily Muslims.[19] This historical context helps Ghosh make a commentary and criticism on the caste system as it still continues to harm people around him in 2008.

In *Sea of Poppies,* Ghosh criticizes and argues against colonialism and the caste system, as it pertains to the past British rule and exploitation in India, but also in present-day caste system

[14] Chandni Saxena, "Dimensions and Dynamics of Violence During Partition of India," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 74 (2013): 909-920.
[15] Saxena, "Violence During Partition of India," page 915.
[16] Office of the Historian, "The India-Pakistan War of 1965," U.S. Department of State (U.S. Department of State), accessed March 28, 2022, https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/india-pakistan-war.
[17] The Historian, "War of 1965," U.S. Department of State.
[18] Metcalf and Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India*, page 277.
[19] Metcalf and Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India*, page 277.

injustices. Paul Stasi argues that in *Sea of Poppies*, Ghosh does intend to criticize the hypocrisy and injustices of British colonialism during the 19th century, but not without also highlighting the injustices within the traditional Indian caste system.[20] Stasi believes that Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* tells the story of "a range of subjects with multiple allegiances," negotiating "an emergent world-capitalist system," rather than presenting colonialism as an overarching system that imposes its will on Indian culture.[21] This statement is exemplified not only in India's attempts to overcome its colonial past, but also its efforts to overcome its pre-colonial caste system which was further exploited by the British. Echoes of this is seen in Indira Gandhi's forced sterilization of India's lower castes in 1964. A naïve survey of the history of India during mid-nineteenth century British colonialism could easily lead one to conclude that the primary source of India's hardships and oppression can be laid at the feet of the overarching system of British colonialism. However, as Ghosh shows us, it is not that simple. The caste system itself was responding to the emerging global capitalism in ways that deepened already long held biases and injustices. Finally, Stasi argues that Ghosh's realism relies on the paralleled stories and multiple plots of different characters to "produce a larger social whole."[22] This is especially demonstrated in the characters Neel and Ah Fatt, who develop a relationship that threatens the power of colonialism and caste because it is one that neither Mr. Crowle or Bhyro Singh cannot grab a hold of and break completely. These characters reflect the paralleled stories that produce a larger social whole that Stasi refers to, as they come from two drastically different backgrounds and unify a sacred and powerful community with each other.

Ghosh presents us with a character in *Sea of Poppies* who ultimately embodies the power that British colonialism has on India: The British first mate Mr. Crowle. Often called "Burra Malum" by the lascars, Mr. Crowle is preceded by a reputation of being a cruel man towards the lascars, the British, and the Americans on the Ibis. A prime example of Mr. Crowle embodying the power of British colonialism is when he berates Serang Ali for sleeping and spitting on the deck of the ship. Ghosh writes, "At this, the Burra Malum snatched a bitt-stopper off the bulwark and ordered the serang to get down on his knees and clean up the mess. He had been swearing all the while, of course, but now he used an oath that everyone understood: Soor-ka-batcha. Son of a

[20] Paul Stasi, "Amitav Ghosh's 'Sea of Poppies' and the Question of Postcolonial Modernism," *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 48, no. 3 (November 2015): 323-343.
[21] Paul Stasi, "The Question of Postcolonial Modernism," 334.
[22] Paul Stasi, "The Question of Postcolonial Modernism," 334.

pig? Serang Ali?"[23] In this quote, Ghosh is presenting a scene that shows the true power and cruelty that Mr. Crowle, who symbolizes British colonialism, holds over the colonized. The phrase "Soor-ka-batcha" means "son of a pig" and Mr. Crowle uses this phrase to belittle Serang Ali, a Muslim man, because it is one that insults someone, "Muslim or not."[24] Mr. Crowle carefully chose these words to show Serang Ali and all of the lascars observing the incident that he had the power to treat them however he wanted, much like the entirety of British colonialism in India. Ghosh deliberately has Mr. Crowle using an insult that is applicable to all regardless of religion because the harm that British colonialism imposed was not imposed on one specific religious group, the harm was felt by all and this is Ghosh's way of reminding readers of that.

Ghosh also presents us with a character that embodies the precolonial history of India's caste system that the British were able to exploit for their own gain: Bhyro Singh. Singh is Deeti's late husband's uncle who is on board the Ibis as a Subedar, a high-ranking officer in the Indian military that is controlled by the British East India Company. His character is used to symbolize the exploited, pre-colonial caste system by acting as a tool for the British to carry out heinous acts against his own community of Indians. After Bhyro Singh figures out that Deeti is on the Ibis with her new husband Kalua, a Dalit, he subjects Kalua to a harsh lashing of the whip and sentences him to death.[25] As Bhyro Singh is whipping Kalua, Ghosh writes, "Kalua heard him clearly, through the buzzing in his head, and he asked, in a whisper: Malik—what have I ever done to you? The question—as much as the bewildered tone in which it was asked—further enraged Bhyro Singh. Done? he said. Isn't it enough that you are what you are?"[26] This line that Ghosh writes explicitly shows how exactly the British were able to use Indians as a tool of oppression, by presenting an Indian character who carries out violence against other Indians so that the British do not have to.

Given these embodiments of British colonial power in dividing the Indian population, Ghosh's overall argument in *Sea of Poppies* is that there is a way to resist the oppressive system of caste and to have a possibility of change in India. Ghosh does this by expressing opposition through the oppressed characters of the book, specifically Neel and Ah Fatt. At the very end of chapter twenty, Mr. Crowle and Bhyro Singh try to see if they have the power to break Neel and

[23] Amitav Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008) page 223.
[24] Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies*, page 223.
[25] Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies*, page 474.
[26] Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies*, page 474.

Ah Fatt's strong bond, like they can do with everything else.[27] Ghosh then describes Neel's realization in the following quotation:

> Neel glanced at Ah Fatt, who was looking stoically at his feet: strange to think, that having known each other for only a few weeks, the two of them—pitiful pair of convicts and transportees that they were—already possessed something that could excite the envy of men whose power over them was absolute. Could it be that there was something genuinely rare in such a bond as theirs, something that could provoke others to exert their ingenuity in order to test its limits? If that were so, then he, Neel, was no less curious on that score than they.[28]

In this quote, Ghosh has found a way to write back to the colonizer by creating a relationship between Ah Fatt and Neel that is unbelievable, as well as one that possesses something internally that the colonizer, Mr. Crowle, cannot grab a hold of and control.[29] This bond that Ah Fatt and Neel share is also one that completely undermines how the caste system operates. Ghosh accomplishes this through his characterization of Neel as a man who, at the beginning of the book, is at the very top of the caste system, but has a such a strong and deeply rooted bond with Ah Fatt, someone whom the caste system views as unthinkable to even have a conversation with.

Although Neel has fallen to a lower level throughout the book, this relationship with Ah Fatt has opened up possibilities and a sense of community, which is such a strong opposition to the colonizer and caste system because it is a bond of shared humanity that transcends ethnicity, caste, race, and culture. It is significant that a Chinese man and an Indian man have such a bond because British colonialism has devastated both China and India equally, and Neel and Ah Fatt represent a resistance of these two places. Their rare bond goes beyond capitalism and materialism and is instead a spiritual bond in which they do not see each other as the commodities that the British had turned them into. Ghosh not only includes this realization through Neel to open the possibility of change to the caste system in 1838, but to also open up a conversation on how opposition to caste in the twenty-first century can provide a possibility of community and strong bonds that would ultimately help move the country of India forward.

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[27]Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies*, page 444.
[28] Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies*, page 444
[29] Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies*, page 444.

In *Sea of Poppies,* Ghosh has written a commentary upon how creating bonds along caste lines can open a possibility for change and demonstrates how this form of opposition to colonialism and the caste system can be just as effective in the modern day as in the past. The historical context of the novel's setting of the book helps develop this argument because 1838 is before the Opium War begins, which means there was a moment of possibility before the definitive future of India. The history behind the book also helps develop Ghosh's argument of opposition being effective in the modern day because as India is drastically changing, there is possibility to change how successfully the caste system operates in India. *Sea of Poppies* shows us in both subtle and explicit ways that race relations are primarily understood as human relations. If we embrace the vision of Ghosh's book, we can begin to see the challenges we face through the lens of a shared humanity rather than humanity perpetually separated along lines of race and class.

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The Line Between Personal Liberty and Absolute Free Trade

Dawson Oliver

In *Sea of Poppies*, Amitav Ghosh sets the events of the book on the eve of the First Opium War (1839-1842). The book focuses on the assorted crew of a convert slave ship that is transporting cheap laborers from British India to other British colonies to work their fields now that slavery had been outlawed. The ship is the gate to everyone involved in the story whether that be freedom from their class status, prison, striking it rich, or overcoming racial boundaries. The book is the first of a trilogy that follows those involved in the story of the ship, the *Ibis*, and its journey from India. The driving forces for many of the characters within the novel are free trade and personal liberty, just as the driving force of the First Opium War was the British desire for free trade in China, while the Chinese wanted to prevent mass opioid addiction and the exploitation of their people. Ghosh argues that these two philosophies are intertwined and clash in the novel, since the characters cannot have one without the other. The self-righteous English merchant Benjamin Burnham, in particular, becomes a representative for the white colonizer as a whole due to his demand for absolute free trade and his belief that his personal liberty is being taken away when free trade is restricted. On the other hand, Ghosh emphasizes the colonized people have no personal freedom because to participate in the colonizers' free trade system they have to sacrifice their personal freedoms through the act of selling oneself to be a laborer. However, the British enjoy the freedom to demand absolute free trade without making any meaningful sacrifices.

Overall, Ghosh illustrates the tension between the philosophies of free trade and personal liberty to demonstrate the shortcomings of both in a modern-day India as it grapples with its identity as an emerging capitalist nation in the wake of British colonialism. Many would argue that both philosophies are good in practice and belong in a modern, civilized industrialized nation-state. However, Ghosh demonstrates that when free trade has no checks or rules, as was the case with the British East India Company, trade devolves into the selling of anything or anyone, as long as the price is right. Ultimately, Ghosh argues that the legacy of the absolute free market capitalist society the British colonizers established in India has bled into 21st-century decolonized India. He forcefully paints an alternative picture of India as a modern nation-state in the community that emerges on the *Ibis*—the converted slave ship that is the primary setting for much of the latter half of the book. The community established on the ship is not defined by capitalism, religion, or free

trade but rather shared human rights and the personal liberty that comes with a socialist vision of the nation, akin to that advocated by Gandhi and Nehru.

The expansion of the British empire into Southeast Asia, specifically India and China, was the result of the British merchants' insatiable lust for total control of the global free trade markets and their desire for cheap exportable labor. In the six years since the British banned slavery, British merchants had found another source of cheap and exploitable labor: coolies. Coolies were a term for what were essentially wage slaves from Southeast Asia. They were used to work fields and processing plants in place of slaves from Africa since the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade was banned in 1807. The British used India as a massive opium plantation and processing plant. Exploitation of the Indian people included almost all aspects of their daily life. The British East India Company virtually owned the Indian subcontinent and treated it as a business entity rather than a country full of people. The Indian people were prevented from growing crops to sustain themselves but were instead forced to cultivate and grow only poppy plants. British merchants sought to max out their profits and felt it was their right to use India as a massive opium-producing plant.

The British saw no issue with exploiting the Indian and Chinese people due to the Europeans' sense of superiority rooted in being white. The 19th century was plagued by concepts such as the pseudoscience practice of social Darwinism and the idea that it was the burden of the West to civilize the rest of the world. Europeans, specifically the British in this instance, saw the indigenous people as no more than animals. The people of India and China did not practice their religion, they did not look like them, and they certainly did not share the same beliefs about trade as the Europeans did. The highly addictive nature of opium and opium-based products were known, or at least understood in essence, by the British which is why they did not desire to export it to Europe for its addictive roots to dig in at home. Rather, they set their sights on China and eventually India itself would be engulfed in the wave of opium addiction. The Chinese government, distraught with what was happening to its nation, took issue with the British for crippling its nation with the opium trade. A Chinese government representative, Lin Zexu, states in a letter to Queen Victoria that the British prevent opium from being grown in their home country and instead have forced most of India to become either poppy fields or poppy processing plants.[30] He argues that if the

[30] Ssu-yu Teng and John K. Fairbank, *China's Response to the West: A Documentary Survey* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 24-27.

British regulate opium in their country then why do the British take issue with the Chinese attempting to regulate opium in their own country.[31]

The British merchants and government did not want to lose the source of their lucrative profit that stemmed from selling opium to China then turning around and selling Chinese goods at home for exponentially higher prices than what they initially cost.[32] The British fought back against the claims in a variety of ways such as through the government withholding information from the general public or placing the blame of the sin of using opium on the Chinese and Indian people. The more common of the two was placing the blame of the original sin solely on the Chinese and Indian people for being Godless savages who desired to use the opium as they do not practice Christianity.[33] The British quickly placed the blame on "the other" by saying that it is man's natural instinct to use opium but it is especially the Chinese and Indians fault for using it because of their Godless nature.[34] By the time when *Sea of Poppies* takes place, the British East India Company would have certifiable control over most of India either directly or indirectly, indirect control was done through the calling of local rulers.[35] The mainstay in all of the subjugation and oppression of the Southeast Asian and Indian subcontinent was the British East India Company. Their monopoly on the opium trade and the production of opium in India set them at the heart of the eventual Opium War and arguments for Indian home rule.

The legacy of the British East India Company and the capitalistic free-trade roots it left behind have also plagued decolonized India during the time when *Sea of Poppies* was written in 2008. The argument for home rule and independence from British rule was not a new concept when India gained its independence from British rule in 1947. Home rule was the concept that the people of an occupied country, who were loyal to the occupying forces, ruled over the country instead of a representative from the occupying country. The princes and various local leaders had betrayed their subjects in the effort to maintain their power as well as partake in the massive profits of the East India Company.[36] These betrayals and the shift towards embracing European traditions of civilization are argued against in *Indian Home Rule* by Mohandas Gandhi. Gandhi pinpoints the

[31] Ssu-yu Teng and John K. Fairbank, *China's Response to the West: A Documentary Survey*, 25.
[32] Ssu-yu Teng and John K. Fairbank, *China's Response to the West: A Documentary Survey*, 25.
[33] Derks, Hans. *History of the Opium Problem: The Assault on the East, Ca. 1600-1950*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012
[34] Derks, Hans. *History of the Opium Problem: The Assault on the East, Ca. 1600-1950*.
[35] "Editorial," *Leeds Mercury*, September 7, 1839, 4-6.
[36] "Editorial," *Leeds Mercury*, September 7, 1839, 5.

poisons and evils of what the Europeans consider culture.[37] One such aspect of this European culture is that in Europe, and now India, the working class went from working on their farms at their own pace in the open air to working in horrendous conditions in factories and mines.[38] These changes began happening in India as the British sought to instill their culture and form of civilization upon the Indian people. These workers worked in conditions that Gandhi states were worse than what animals lived in, and the conditions forced the workers to risk their own lives for the profits of millionaires.[39] In the grand scheme of the Imperialist economic venture, the British were bringing the Industrial Revolution to an unwilling India. The social and cultural leadership of the Indian people knew that this invasion of industry would pollute the minds and souls of the Indian people for decades to come. Gandhi and his allies were issuing a challenge to the Indian people as much as they were to the British.

They sought to establish the old ways that the Indian people had practiced for millennia, before the British colonization of India. Gandhi and his allies, most notably his closest ally Jawaharlal Nehru, were large proponents of not only Indian home rule and independence but also a dismantling of the capitalist system that the British had so deeply rooted within the Indian subcontinent. They did not want the Indian people to reject the world and its advances, but instead reject the capitalistic view of the world that the British East India Company had created in India. Nehru states plainly in "The Importance of the National Idea" that there are factions of Hindus who wish to return to the teachings and values of the Vedas while there are some Muslims who dream of an Islamic theocracy.[40] He responds to these factions by stating that the people in India cannot return to the past because time flows in a single direction. He follows by directly stating that the people of India must lessen the concept of religiosity of the past and instead turn to science.[41] Both men understood that India needed to embrace its own standards of civilization while also remaining current with the rest of the world. They believed that the traditions of India would allow for both processes to work together.

Gandhi and Nehru both wanted to create India as a socialist like state while also breeding Indian nationalism. Nehru specifically believed that socialist practices and policies would create a

[37] Mohandas Gandhi, *Indian Home Rule* (1909) (Madras: Ganesh, 1919), 26-28, 30, 65-69, 71.
[38] Mohandas Gandhi, *Indian Home Rule* (1909).
[39] Mohandas Gandhi, *Indian Home Rule* (1909).
[40]Prasenjit Duara. *Decolonization : Perspectives From Now and Then*. 36.
[41] Prasenjit Duara. *Decolonization : Perspectives From Now and Then*. 37.

more progressive and inclusive form of nationalism.[42] One that would encompass all Indians regardless of religion or caste. However, nationalists within the Hindu and Muslim sections would soon create conflict within the country that would eventually force the partition of the Indian subcontinent into what is now modern-day Pakistan and India. The riots and mass killings carried out by extremists of Hindu and Muslim variety (more so Hindu factions than Muslims factions) overshadowed Indian independence in 1947.[43]

In contrast to the rise of Hindu nationalism and capitalism on the subcontinent in the wake of British colonialism, in *Sea of Poppies*, Ghosh paints an alternative vision for India's future that is based in Gandhi's philosophy of Indian home rule through the return to the pre-colonial priorities. Literary critics often interpret the novel in terms of gender, and race. For example, Rudrani Gangopadhyay argues that Ghosh brings to life the human element of the British Empire's economy by highlighting the condition within which the colonized people lived within the subcontinent.[44] The author states that Ghosh sets the novel in a time period where India's only exports were "drugs and thugs-opium and coolies or laborers."[45] He concludes that the displacement of these otherwise strangers allows them to have new found personal liberty that they would have never been able to achieve on land and is only possible on the *Ibis*.[46] Gangopadhyay largely focuses on race and gender through Deeti, a woman of low caste who is presently on the run after refusing to marry her deceased husband's brother, and Kalua, a man of the "untouchable" class who has stepped out of the caste system and is also on the run for his crimes. I agree with Gangopadhyay but argue that Ghosh critiques the rhetoric of free trade embodied by Burnham and shows the colonized people's personal liberties decrease in proportion to the British personal liberties increasing.

Ghosh covers the themes of free trade and personal liberties throughout the novel through the lens of the historical context of the subjugation of India and China by way of the opium trade. This paper will analyze two scenes within the novel that explicitly cover the previously mentioned themes. The first scene that will be analyzed is the first dinner party in which Burnham, Zachary, Neel, and Doughty discuss Burnham's financial ventures, specifically his dealings with selling

[42] Prasenjit Duara. *Decolonization : Perspectives From Now and Then*. 32.
[43] Metcalf, Barbara Daly, and Thomas R. Metcalf. 2012. *A Concise History of Modern India*. Vol. 3rd ed. Cambridge Concise Histories. Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press.
[44] Gangopadhyay, Rudrani. "Finding Oneself On Board the "Ibis" in Amitav Ghosh's "Sea of Poppies". 56.
[45] Gangopadhyay, Rudrani. "Finding Oneself On Board the "Ibis" in Amitav Ghosh's "Sea of Poppies". 56.
[46] Gangopadhyay, Rudrani. "Finding Oneself On Board the "Ibis" in Amitav Ghosh's "Sea of Poppies". 64.

opium to China. Burnham and Doughty's assessment of the situation is that it has gotten much worse and that Britain will be forced to go to war with China in order to force China to continue buying opium. Burnham expresses his true feelings about the British trade in China when he corrects Neel's assumptions that there is no impending Opium War, an opinion which is similar to his opinion on slavery earlier in the book. This opinion is expressed through him stating:

> "Well then, it falls to me to inform you, sir," said Mr. Burnham, "that of late the officials in Canton have been moving forcefully to end the inflow of opium into China. It is the unanimous opinion of all of us who do business there that the mandarins cannot be allowed to have their way. To end the trade would be ruinous—for firms like mine, but also for you, and indeed for all of India."[47]

Ghosh uses Burnham's dialogue here, "To end the trade would be ruinous—for firms like mine, but also for you, and indeed for all of India," to directly state that if China prevents the free trade of opium by the British it would directly impede on merchants like Burnham's personal liberties to trade whatever they wish.[48] Ghosh is condemning Burnham and the capitalist imperial system he represents because the interconnected nature of free trade and personal liberty for the British come at the expense of Indians like Neel. Ghosh's use of the word unanimous in this quotation uses Burnham again to communicate that the opinions of the British are assumed to be the same as the Indian people or that only the British opinion mattered.

Burnham serves as the personification of the British East India Company in this scene because he equates his potential loss of profits with that of the loss of profits for all of India. The reality is that the only real beneficiaries of the lucrative opium trade are British colonizers and Indians of high status such as Neel. Later in the party Burnham comes out and directly states:

> "The war, when it comes, will not be for opium. It will be for principle: for freedom-for the freedom of trade and for the freedom of the Chinese. Free Trade is a right conferred on Man by God, and its principles apple as much to opium as to any other article of trade. More so perhaps, since in its absence many millions of natives would be denied the lasting advantages of British influence."[49]

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[47] Ghosh, Amitav. *Sea of Poppies*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008. 109.
[48] Ghosh, Amitav. *Sea of Poppies.* 109.
[49] Ghosh, Amitav. *Sea of Poppies*. 110.

Ghosh uses Burnham to plainly state the Western position in this section by addressing the opium issue through the lens of the colonizer. This admission by Burnham characterizes the colonizer's belief that it is their right to exploit and enslave (via addiction) the native people under the guise of free trade all the while believing that they are doing these people a service by bringing them European civilization. Ghosh is also using this admission by Burnham to comment on the hypocrisy of the British in that they viewed the Indians and Chinese as godless savages yet Burnham believes that absolute free trade is derived from "a right conferred on Man by God" which, in reality, is the British convincing themselves that the opium trade is justified.[50] Burnham, just as many other Europeans, blames the widespread opium addiction within Southeast Asia, specifically Canton, on the "fallen nature of Man" and equates the numerous opium dens within the city to "the gin shops of the Empire's capital."[51] Again, Ghosh is commenting on the hypocrisy of the British to use Christianity as justification for why China should allow the unregulated trade of opium. The British shifted the blame for the widespread opium addiction from themselves to the individual person in cities like Canton. Ghosh is directly charging the British with the crime of creating the opium addiction in the name of the British system of absolute free trade through the use of religion.

In chapter eleven of *Sea of Poppies*, Ghosh uses another dinner party to parallel the one held in chapter five. The section of analysis of the party consists of Zachary, Burnham, Captain Chillingworth, Doughty, and Judge Kendalbushe. The men shift their discussion to war with China and the necessity of war if the opium trade is to carry on without any restrictions. Burnham is quick to state during the discussion that "No one dislikes war more than I do-indeed I abhor it" which Ghosh is using to comment on the British's view of themselves. Burnham continues by stating that "In China that time has come: nothing else will do."[52] Here Ghosh shows that despite claiming to despise war, Burnham, who is still the personification of the British, views his belief of absolute free trade to be a higher priority than avoiding war. This disregards the fact that war would directly infringe on the personal liberties of the Chinese and strip the Chinese of any sense of self governance. Doughty chimes into the conversation with a comment on what would become of the Indian peasant if the opium trade was destroyed. "...poor Indian peasant-what will become of him

[50] Ghosh, Amitav. *Sea of Poppies*. 110.
[51] Ghosh, Amitav. *Sea of Poppies*. 114.
[52] Ghosh, Amitav. *Sea of Poppies*. 114.

if his opium can't be sold in China? They'll perish by the crore."[53] The Indian people had been made poor not by any choice of their own, but rather by the British forcing the specialization of poppies and opium on the subcontinent. Ghosh is also connecting the historical setting of the book with the historical context of when the book was written. The focus on forcing India into specializing in the growing and producing of opium is a comment on the modern-day push for India to become or be seen as the technology hub of the world. The Indian people again are being forced into fields of specialization such as customer support centers for Western tech giants as well as producing specific technology parts to be exported.

Justice Kendalbushe presents a different view of why war is necessary during the discussion at the party. Kendalbushe shares information he had received from a Christian missionary friend of his: "My friends in the Missions are agreed that a war is necessary if China is to be open up to God's word. It's a pity, of course, but it's best to get it over and done with."[54]Here, Ghosh is again directly calling out the hypocrisy of the British colonizer's twisted view of Christianity as the way to successfully open China to direct British influence. This would, of course, allow for British merchants to sell opium to China with no restrictions. Ghosh presents how free trade and personal liberty affect the people being colonized here as well. The British were essentially forcing the colonized people of India and China to sacrifice any personal liberty in order to participate in their free trade. The colonized people were forced to participate because if they did not they were either punished or starved.

During this dinner, Captain Chillingworth somberly discusses the situation in China with a view that is significantly different from others at the table. Ghosh uses Chillingworth to speak the reality of the situation rather than the glorification of war and conquest that had been presented before him:

> "I am sure it will do a great deal of good for some of us. But I doubt I'll be of that number, or that any Chinamen will. The truth is, sir, that men do what their power permits them to do. We are no different from the Pharaohs or the Mongols: the difference is only that when we kill people we feel compelled to pretend that it is for some higher cause. It is the pretence of virtue, I promise you, that will not be forgiven by history."[55]

[53] Ghosh, Amitav. *Sea of Poppies*. 255.
[54] Ghosh, Amitav. *Sea of Poppies*. 255.
[55] Ghosh, Amitav. *Sea of Poppies*. 257.

Here Ghosh uses Chillingworth as the only rebuttal to the discussion of war. Chillingworth is the only one at the table that is capable of seeing the gravity of the situation in China. He understands the position the British have put themselves in by stating, "when we kill people we feel compelled to pretend that it is for some higher cause" through which Ghosh states that the British were aware of what they were doing, but instead chose to lie to themselves in order to convince the general public and themselves that the opium trade was God's Will. Ghosh returns to the previous point of calling out the British hypocrisy because he knows that if religious figures in Britain or anywhere else in Europe tried to justify the selling of opium or any other illicit substance under the guise of it being God's Will they would be tried as blasphemers and heretics. However, by saying opium is the way to open China to God they are held as heroes of the faith.

Given the power of the rhetoric of the British East India Company, as represented by Burnham, Ghosh presents the characters within the book as given unique and otherwise unreachable opportunities on the Indian Ocean. The community onboard the *Ibis* is a representative of the ideal India pictured by Gandhi and Nehru. The *Ibis* is an imaginary home for those on the ship. This home was free of the absolute free-trade capitalist system that was thoroughly rooted in India. The passengers and crew of the ship are a representation of how Nehru wanted India to be post-colonialism. The crew and passengers are all of different faiths, backgrounds, and regions yet they form one community on board the *Ibis*. Ghosh is showing what the ideal India would have looked like, just as Gandhi and Nehru had envisioned.

In conclusion, Ghosh uses *Sea of Poppies* as a medium to comment on the trajectory of India when the novel was written. He did so by presenting the ways the legacy of the East India Company and its capitalist roots were very much still present within Indian culture. The people of India had become focused on specialization to be in line with what the West wanted them to be. Ghosh uses the novel to present the concepts of absolute free trade and personal liberty as being intimately connected in that for the British colonizer as free trade increases personal liberty also increases. However, the relationship for the colonized people is when free trade increases then personal liberty decreases. Ghosh uses characters such as Burnham and Doughty to serve as personifications of British imperialism and colonization. Ghosh then uses the *Ibis*'s crew and the indentured servants onboard the ship as direct examples of the exploitation of the colonized people. Ghosh is presenting the two philosophies in practice with the intent of showing the shortcomings of both.

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Reinterpreting the "Crazy" Creole Girl:
Racial, Gendered, and Colonial Purity in *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Alexandra Wilson

Jean Rhys's postcolonial novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea* reclaims the "madwoman in the attic," Bertha, from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Rhys renames Bertha, thus transforming her into the complex character Antoinette, and she explores the liminal position that Anoinette occupies as a Creole woman in the Caribbean just after Emancipation. Many critics interpret Antoinette in terms of her hybridity, discussing the intersections between race, gender, and nationality that contribute to her oppression in nineteenth-century British colonial society. I will add to this conversation by viewing these themes through the lens of purity culture, specifically Antoinette's victimization and punishment for failing to meet European ideals of purity. I argue that Jean Rhys interrogates several notions of purity in the novel including racial, gendered, and nationalist. She combats Western hegemonic views of purity by depicting Antoinette as a Creole woman living in Jamaica in the 1840s. Although hybridity is frequently a strength for postcolonial writers who can use both the European and indigenous cultures to subvert colonialism's racial hierarchies, Antoinette's hybridity is a weakness. European purity culture does not value hybridity but instead victimizes Antoinette through the imperialistic agenda, fears surrounding racial purity, and stigmas handcuffing women to notions of madness. Ultimately, *Wide Sargasso Sea* challenges the purity of the Western canon by addressing the blind spots in British literature.

Postcolonial critic Edward Said proposes in "Empire, Geography, and Culture," from his classic text *Culture and Imperialism*, that the imperialistic blind spots of the Western canon can be addressed by pairing "classics" with postcolonial texts. Said argues that the perception of our modern-day reality is shaped by the continuing repercussions of the past (4). This, of course, is true for the lingering "political and economic" choices of history; however, Said is interested in the impact of culture in terms of the "modern imperial experience" (5). European hegemony or cultural dominance established and imposed as the norm, inflicted on global cultures through imperialism, still inflicts wounds in the twenty-first century (5). The impact of culture within postcolonialism is twofold. On one hand, European hegemonic pressure was imposed on colonial subjects, leaving deep psychological and generational injuries. On the other hand, the rhetorical propaganda of imperialism helped make the message of colonialism more palatable amongst the

everyman in Europe. This infusion amidst the population allowed for the civilizing mission to take root in the hearts and minds of Europeans. This belief then grew into an "almost metaphysical obligation to rule subordinate, inferior, or less advanced peoples" (10). Thus, the normalization of imperialism seeped its way into "cultural formations" such as literature (12).

This is evident in Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, both in Jane's inheritance coming from colonial exploitation and also in the treatment of "the madwoman in the attic," Bertha Mason. Said asserts that canonical European novels, such as Brontë's, should not be thrown out due to the blind spots in the narrative. Rather, by understanding the historical context of these novels in light of imperialism they become "*more* interesting and *more* valuable as works of art" (13). Said's purpose is connection and the complication that comes along with the "hybrid, mixed, [and] impure" of examining culture in a postcolonial context (14). An effective means of establishing these connections is to pair western texts with postcolonial responses to illuminate what has been neglected for so long. Jean Rhys accomplishes this by reclaiming Brontë's Bertha Mason as Antoinette Cosway. Through Antoinette's intersectionality as a Creole woman living in British Jamaica, the domination and standards of European cultural purity can be properly evaluated through the several layers of her identity.

The "metaphysical obligation to rule" that Said discusses is represented in *Wide Sargasso Sea* as Rhys reinterprets Mr. Edward Rochester not as the Byronic hero in *Jane Eyre* but as the English colonizer. As Rochester observes the scenery of Dominica, he thinks to himself, "It was a beautiful place – wild, untouched, above all untouched, with an alien, disturbing, secret loveliness. And it kept its secret. I'd find myself thinking, 'What I see is nothing – I want what it *hides* – that is nothing'" (51-52). Rochester's desire to control and to possess this "alien" land is instilled in him through the imperial mission of European culture. Rochester's colonial desires are met with hostility and as he "[feels] this place is [his] enemy" (78). He is unaccustomed to the climate and feels "very much a stranger" (78) within the Caribbean. Rochester's desire for the "secret" of the land and its "loveliness" parallels his need to control Antoinette in his representation of patriarchal and imperialist domination. As they were leaving the Caribbean for England, Rochester thought, "I hated the sunsets of whatever colour, I hated its beauty and its magic and the secret I would never know. I hated its indifference and the cruelty which was part of its loveliness. She had left me thirsty and all my life would be thirst and longing for what I had lost before I found it" (103). Rochester's "thirst" is for the Caribbean and for Antoinette—both lovely and alien entities that he

could not understand and thus can never fully possess. The hatred that Rochester develops for both place and woman is directed and inflicted upon Antoinette because as her husband, he has the power to subjugate her to his will. He hates Antoinette because he cannot understand her perspective as a Creole woman.

The Creole identity and its position in the European perspective are analyzed through a postcolonial lens in Tim Watson's essay, "The Colonial Novel." A Creole is a person living in the Caribbean of European descent. They are not considered fully white or fully European, because they have been in the Caribbean for generations. Watson describes:

> As the nineteenth century went on, the increasingly common ascription of racial ambiguity or miscegenation to the category of the creole (as in the figure of Bertha imprisoned in the attic in *Jane Eyre*) is an indication of the ambiguity of the term itself when it came to social and racial inclusiveness. (18)

Watson specifically identifies "Bertha" as a symbol of "ambiguity" as she is both distinctly different and yet similar to the European. Watson refers to the blurred hybridity that takes place within the Creole. The "purity" of Creole bloodlines was regarded with heavy suspicion. Due to the suspicion surrounding her racial purity, Antoinette is categorized as a fundamentally hybrid character. She is not a person of color, but also not accepted as white, and is placed in the liminal category as a racialized "other." She cannot identify with the indigenous population or the recently freed, formerly enslaved Africans, nor is she considered equal with Europeans.

Christophine, Antoinette's mother figure, and a black servant to her family discusses the undefined racial position of the Creole. To Rochester, she says, "'She [Antoinette] is not *béké* like you, but she is *béké*, and not like us either'" (93). Judith L. Raiskin, the editor of *Wide Sargasso Sea,* defines *béké* as another term to describe "a white person" (68). Therefore, Christophine explicitly describes the liminal position of the Creole. She is racially white, but not white in the sense that Rochester is white. His "whiteness" aligns with the European hegemonic norms that are being imposed globally through imperialism. Additionally, Christophine recognizes the literal racial difference between herself and the family she serves and cannot classify Antoinette with herself and other black Jamaicans. Antoinette understands that she is not black and labels herself as "white" (20); however, there is a disconnect. She calls her step-father "white pappy" and when looking at her friend Tia, a young black girl, she thought, "It was as if I saw myself. Like in a looking-glass" (27). The "looking-glass," or mirror, symbolizes Antoinette's search for identity

and belonging within the racial politics of the Caribbean. Her self-perception does not equate to reality as the history of colonialism and slavery created long-lasting wounds that separate the white and black experiences. Antoinette understands her own liminality and undefined position within the Caribbean, and Rhys depicts how this became a weakness for Antoinette as she was coerced into a marriage contract with the British colonizer, Mr. Rochester.

Critic Silvia Cappello builds upon Watson's framework of the Creole in a colonial setting and further examines the implications of the Creole's racial indeterminacy in "Postcolonial Discourse in 'Wide Sargasso Sea': Creole Discourse vs. European Discourse, Periphery vs. Center, and Marginalized People vs. White Supremacy." Cappello analyzes race in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and how the liminal position of being Creole situates them as an "other" to both the white Europeans and the black population. Cappello argues:

> *Wide Sargasso Sea* is a novel about Creole identities and race relations, themes of displacement, and the groups' different relationships with home. There is also a great concern with subjectivity, especially in relation to the concept of identity. Jean Rhys points out that society constructs subjects' identity and the individual reflects the identity society contributed to create. (50)

Cappello establishes the liminal position of the Creole as an identity group that truly has no home. This indeterminacy of place is enhanced by the emancipation of enslaved individuals and the transfer of power from the Creole to the Europeans as they came in and purchased plantations as is the case with Mr. Mason in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Additionally, Cappello refers to the power of hegemonic norms to construct an individual's identity. In her article, she emphasizes the anxiety surrounding the Creoles in terms of their racial purity. While on their honeymoon, Rochester regards Antoinette and notes "Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either" (Rhys 39). Cappello interprets this as Rochester distancing himself from Antoinette as he considers her a racialized other and begins to view her as both racially and culturally "inferior" (Cappello 51). Cappello relates Rochester's unease concerning Antoinette to her "ties linking [her] with the black culture and community" (51). This could be extended by considering that the Creole identity is not only punished for what they are, as Cappello notes, but also for what they are not in terms of their failure to maintain the "purity" of Western European hegemonic norms. This encompasses racial, gender, and cultural standards, and Antoinette as a Creole embodies the perceived failure of every one of those standards.

Frantz Fanon, a Caribbean postcolonial literary critic, and psychologist differs from Cappello, as he focuses on the psychological trauma that black subjects experience during colonialism and slavery in *Black Skin, White Masks*. For Fanon, in terms of the black experience, the legacy of colonialism has created an "inferiority complex" because their "local cultural originality has been committed to the grave" (2). This creates a split sense of identity. As Fanon argues in light of Western European hegemonic norms, "The whiter the [black Antillean] gets, […] the closer he comes to becoming a true human being" (2). He further describes the search for identity facing black people worldwide due to the history and dehumanization of colonialism, slavery, and the imposition of hegemonic norms. Fanon demonstrates how the pervasive influence of white European values ingrains a false notion that Western European culture equates to humanity and civilization.

Postcolonial critic Fanon reclaims the black identity against these racist and hegemonic norms and strives to heal the psychological wounds of colonialism amongst the black population. Antoinette complicates Fanon's argument and the racial politics of postcolonial theory when they are exclusively understood from the perspective of the black colonial subject. She experiences similar psychological pressures as Fanon discusses such as feelings of generational "inferiority" and a split sense of self. However, in this situation, Creole is not who Fanon is discussing since they are visibly white and clearly not experiencing the trauma of slavery. Nevertheless, there is still trauma taking place, albeit lesser, because the Creole also stands as an outsider to European colonial hegemonic norms. On the surface, Creoles look white but culturally, characters like Antoinette are the Caribbean and therefore non-conforming to Western values. This results in Watson's "ambiguity" and for Fanon, a split sense of self would develop as a result of being rejected by all identity factions, both black and white. Fanon's contribution in terms of the psychological repercussions of colonization in conjunction with the Creole experience and their failure to uphold Western purity creates a lens that can be applied to better understand the psychological damage that Antoinette endures. This framework of trauma can be applied to the multiple intersections of Antoinette's identity in terms of race, culture, and gender.

Antoinette's European family tree positions her as an outsider within the Caribbean, but her cultural alignment excludes her from European society. The rhetoric supporting Antoinette's liminality is evident after her marriage to Rochester. Amélie, a black servant sings a song mockingly, calling her a white cockroach. Antoinette explains the song, and her position in the

Caribbean to Rochester, "It was a song about a white cockroach. That's me. That's what they call all of us who were here before their own people in Africa sold them to the slave traders. And I've heard English women call us white nigger. So, between you and I, I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all" (61). Here, Antoinette ponders her identity and position where she is doubly rejected. The people of color in the Caribbean identify her as a "white cockroach" and the English label her with a racial expletive. Her English ancestry, suspicious bloodlines, and Caribbean culture generate hybridity that is a weakness. Antoinette has no true "country." Her family has been in the Caribbean for generations, but they were there under unjustified circumstances as colonizers. This leaves Antoinette, and the Creole, in a position where no one knows where they "belong." Rochester later goes on to exploit her racial indeterminacy as he grows to disdain the Caribbean and therefore Antoinette who cannot be separated from the culture.

The third section of Antoinette's hybridity is in terms of her gender. In "Unquiet Ghosts: The Struggle for Representation in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*," Mona Fayad examines Rhys's authorial choice to have a woman's story be mostly told through the perspective of a man. Fayad builds upon Cappello's assertion that society constructs identity. She identifies that both Antoinette and her mother are positioned as outsiders to society for their failure to fulfill social standards (226). Western hegemonic norms leave Antoinette and her mother especially vulnerable because they are women in the nineteenth century. Constrained legally by not having full possession of their financial assets as married women, they are also bound by social stigmas concerning madness. Fayad asserts that once the label of "hysteric" has been applied then all validity surrounding female communication is dismissed (236). This barrier allows the Western male perspective to control the narrative. Rhys reflects this control in *Wide Sargasso Sea* by having Rochester narrate the majority of Antoinette's story in Part II of the novel. However, Rhys subverts this, as Fayad identifies, the false sense of security that Rochester has in his complete domination of Antoinette (236). Even though Rochester is the predominant narrator of the novel, he does not have complete domination over Antoinette's mind and spirit. Fayad argues that Antoinette stands as a representation of all women in the battle to reclaim autonomy. Antoinette's rebirth in *Wide Sargasso Sea* brings her vitality and a will that is not easily subdued. Ultimately, for Fayad and my own argument, Rhys challenges the assumptions of Brontë's Bertha. Fayad contributes:

> [Antoinette's] madness is only a tale told by a 'sane' male whose motivations are at best dubious. She is a representative of our constant, long struggle against suppression in a society that still persists in perceiving woman as object and not as subject and continues to tell its tale of woman without her sound and fury, signifying nothing. (239)

In the last act of the novel, Antoinette reclaims her position as the narrator of her own story. This switch represents the "fury" of women who have been confined by male notions of sanity. Antoinette not only rekindles her energies as a woman but as an outsider in British culture. Her position as a hybrid character stands to represent the ending of the novel not only as feminist subversion but also as a critique of the hegemonic and racial pressures to constrain people to Western European values.

These European values that condemn Antoinette to a life in confinement are reflected in the original text of *Jane Eyre* by Brontë. Bertha is described by Jane in racialized terms. After Bertha destroys Jane's wedding veil, Jane recalls Bertha's characteristics to Rochester, "This, sir, was purple: the lips were swelled and dark; the brow furrowed; the black eyebrows widely raised over the bloodshot eyes" (120). After years in captivity, Bertha is no longer recognizable as a human. Additionally, Rochester can no longer categorize her as human in an attempt to absolve himself in his own mind to justify the abuse he has inflicted upon her. Jane must define her as "this" or "it" because she has been stripped of her femininity. Additionally, her "dark" and "swelled" lips as well as her "black eyebrows" would lead the audience to believe that Bertha was a person of color – which she is not. These racialized depictions paired with the attribution of madness reflect the racist values of European culture within the nineteenth century. Jane even goes as far as to describe Bertha in monstrous terms by calling her a "Vampyre" (120). This reflects Fanon's identification of the colonial pressure that whiteness equates to humanity. Thus, Bertha's failure to live up to European hegemony results in her being degraded to the position of "beast," especially when put in comparison with Jane (Brontë 124). Her Caribbean nationality and indeterminate position as a Creole leave her incomprehensible to European individuals.

Jean Rhys demonstrates the disconnect between Creole and the European. Rhys reclaims the familiar imagery associated with "Bertha" within *Wide Sargasso Sea*. After Rochester's affair, he describes seeing her again, "When I saw her I was too shocked to speak. Her hair hung uncombed and dull into her eyes which were inflamed and staring, her face was very flushed and looked swollen. Her feet were bare. However when she spoke her voice was low, almost inaudible"

(87). Here, Rhys is portraying the origins of the "madwoman." Antoinette's "uncombed" hair and "inflamed" eyes take on a new meaning given the context of the novel. Rhys reclaims Antoinette's "fury" that she was denied within *Jane Eyre*. Antoinette is not a "beast" who is simply "mad" due to her animalistic bloodlines. For Rhys, she is instead a woman who is experiencing grief after her husband has committed adultery. Her "swollen" face and "low" voice are due to grief and heartbreak. She explains her state to him herself:

> Do you know what you have done to me? It's not the girl, not the girl. But I loved this place and you have made it into a place I hate. I used to think that if everything else went out of my life I would still have this, and now you have spoilt it. It's just somewhere else where I have been unhappy. […] I hate it now like I hate you and before I die I will show you how much I hate you. (88-89)

Rhys establishes Antoinette with motivations and a mission that Bertha fulfills in *Jane Eyre*. She "hates" him, not for how he abused her within her marriage, but because he took the land away from her. Rochester's colonization of Antoinette's mind usurped her love of the Caribbean and tarnished it with corrupted memories left by the "obligations" of the imperial mission. Rhys positions Antoinette's fury to mean something in response to Bertha's baseless hysteria within *Jane Eyre*.

In their canonical feminist rereading of 19th century canonical literature, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar analyze the dichotomy of Jane's English rationale and Bertha's emotion in *The Madwoman in the Attic*. When analyzing *Jane Eyre,* Gilbert and Gubar position Bertha as "Jane's truest and darkest double" (360). They present that the central confrontation of the novel is between Jane and Bertha, a personification of Jane's "imprisoned 'hunger, rebellion, and rage'" (339). They note how Bertha is "sensual" as well as "rich, large, florid" and "extravagant," which on the surface is opposite to "poor, plain, [and] little" Jane (360-361). But despite these physical differences, Gilbert and Gubar identify Bertha as a more "threatening" incarnation of Jane (359). Gilbert and Gubar's argument reveals an insightful analysis of Jane's personal journey and the significant parallels and dynamics that are present between Bertha and Jane. However, when viewed through a postcolonial lens, these observations further support the colonial blindness of *Jane Eyre* in the representation and treatment of Bertha. By establishing Bertha as Jane's "darkest double," Brontë contributes to the dehumanizing legacy of colonialism by presenting a figure from the Caribbean simply as the foil to a white European protagonist. By characterizing Bertha as the sensually exotic

and emotionally hysteric woman to Jane's English femininity, Brontë is reflecting the cultural standards for women at the time and how female emotional expression must be punished. And in the instance of *Jane Eyre*, Jane's avatar that symbolizes her "rage" dies at the end of the novel, consequently clearing the path to Jane's happy ending of achieving a marriage composed of equals. In *Wide Sargasso Sea,* Rhys rewrites Bertha's narrative where she stands as more than a colonial counterpart to Jane.

In addition to reclaiming Antoinette, Rhys also further challenges her role as the "madwoman in the attic." In *The Female Malady*, a canonical work of feminist criticism, Elaine Showalter examines hysteria, femininity, literary representation, and cultural treatment within the nineteenth and twentieth century. She explains how hysteria was defined as a "female illness" (52), indeed the "classic female malady" (18). Not only was mental illness constrained to solely affect women, but it was also viewed as hereditary as well. Showalter discusses how Rochester defines Bertha Mason as "a victim of diseased maternal heredity" (67). She further demonstrates this as a reflection that "echoes the beliefs of Victorian psychiatry about the transmission of madness: since the reproductive system was the source of mental illness in women, women were the prime carriers of madness" (67). This "diseased" heredity is exemplified in *Wide Sargasso Sea* as both Antoinette and her mother are declared by their husbands and male doctors to be "mad." This reveals the emphasis on the purity of bloodlines as she was accused of being "crazy like [her] mother" (Rhys 29) for not conforming to Rochester's notions of English femininity. The belief in hysteria tainting the bloodlines is just another way that Antoinette is punished for not living up to Western purity culture. Rochester, a representation of the English colonizer, uses the guise of hysteria to oppress Antoinette and eventually lock her in his attic. Antoinette's intersectionality as a Creole woman leaves her vulnerable to the hegemonic norms of Rochester's imperialistic and patriarchal domination that weaponize madness as a way to strip women and racialized "others" of their human rights.

Rochester justifies Antoinette's imprisonment by driving her to madness through psychological abuse. While on her honeymoon for a marriage that she was pushed into, Rochester cheats on her, gaslights her, and changes her name to Bertha. During a fight, he once again calls her Bertha to which she responds, "Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name. I know, that's obeah too" (88). Rochester denies Antoinette's reality and deprives her of her identity. This psychological abuse inflicts the trauma

that Fanon discusses, as her sense of self is being taken away from her. Antoinette does not accuse him of abuse but rather, she charges him with practicing obeah. Obeah is a West African spiritual practice akin to modern-day voodoo that comes to the Caribbean through the history of slavery and colonialism. Antoinette's reference to obeah is a sign of her Creole identity and her distance from English culture. To her, Rochester utilizes obeah because he is fundamentally trying to make her into someone else. By calling her Bertha, he is stripping her of her identity as a Creole and her sense of self and sanity. Bertha is an English name that represents the hegemonic norms being imposed upon her, and the tragedy is that Antoinette cannot overcome the fate that is Bertha's in *Jane Eyre*. Although her fate is decided, she insists on her name and attempts to reclaim her voice and identity, just as Rhys reclaims Antoinette from the Western literary canon. Rhys rejects European and male authority to dictate the narrative and reality of the "other" who lives in a liminal, colonial space.

Antoinette's hybridity ultimately leads to her downfall as her sense of self crumbles under the hegemonic pressures of society and Rochester's domination. As they head for England, he resigns her to never "laugh in the sun again" (99) as she will be confined to his "English house" (98) that will serve as her prison. He denies her any possibility of ever experiencing human companionship again because he does not "want her" and he ensures that "she'll see no other" (99). This is due to Rochester's internalization of belief in the superiority of Western European culture. He convinces himself, "She's mad but *mine*, *mine*. What will I care for gods or devils or for Fate itself. If she smiles or weeps or both. *For me*. Antoinetta – I can be gentle too. Hide your face. Hide yourself but in my arms. You'll see how gentle. My lunatic. My mad girl" (99). Rochester's desire is to erase Antoinette's identity. At this moment, he wants her to "hide [her] face," but specifically in relation to himself and within his "arms." Rhys's choice in inflecting *"mine"* highlights the imperial need to control and dominate what he considers "inferior." Rochester's perception of Antoinette's inferiority stems from her racial indeterminacy and failure to fulfill hegemonic norms. He punishes Antoinette by having her labeled as a "lunatic." His inability to understand her leads him to believe that he must control her and views her in only how she can service him. To him, her "smiles" and tears must be for and in relation to himself. Antoinette's refusal to be oppressed provides him with neither a smile nor weeping, but instead, she views him with "hatred in her eyes" (102). This fire condemns her to the attic, but while severely abused and traumatized through years of isolation and dehumanization, Antoinette's final act degrades the

"English house" and challenges the purity of Western culture, and of Rochester's position, as the "madwoman" burns her prison to the ground.

By reclaiming Bertha, Rhys stands with other postcolonial writers who combat the enduring impact of colonialism by challenging the Western canon. This in part takes place through the critical evaluation of canonical and beloved works in their complicit support of colonization as in the case of *Jane Eyre*. This does not mean that Western canonical works such as the Brontë's should be discarded but rather, as Edward Said proposed, they should be read alongside postcolonial contributions to become "more interesting and more valuable as works of art" (13) just as in the case with Brontë and Rhys. The happiness of Jane was bought at the price of Antoinette and stands as a critique of how historically feminism was exclusive to white women and it came at the expense of women of color. Additionally, Rhys's narrative gives life to Antoinette beyond the title of the "madwoman in the attic." Instead, Bertha is reborn in *Wide Sargasso Sea* as a fully characterized person who is not simply "crazy" or "barbaric" due to her heritage. Rhys repositions Antoinette as a Creole woman forced into this liminal position, as she is caught in the webs of imperial and racist hegemonic standards and the patriarchal belief in the hysteria of women. Rhys illuminates how the "crazy" Creole girl was not crazy after all.

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"For a moment they are two lovers in a park,
under an ancient tree, sun-dappled, beautiful, and at peace":
The Rejection of Hybridity in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*

Erica Smith

Many Western critics consider terrorism from the perspective of Americans and British citizens who are the victims of terrorist acts. In general, they analyze the West's responses to terrorism since 9/11, such as the increased security procedures and the resultant increase in racism towards British and American Muslims. Consequently, British and American Muslims must choose between assimilating to Western Christian culture and social norms or staying true to their beliefs and culture. In a post-9/11 context, staying true to their culture means often being seen as a threat and not fully American or British. Those who choose to assimilate are accepted by Western society. They become model minorities in a neoliberal rhetoric of a multicultural society. Alternatively, those who choose not to assimilate are viewed as an Other, "barbaric," and a threat to Western society. This division creates animosity within the Muslim community in Western countries. Many young Muslims, especially second-generation immigrants in Europe and the United States, feel that they have nowhere to go and do not belong anywhere. ISIS, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, recruiters capitalize on their lack of assimilation and the hostility of the West to prey on these Western-born Muslims to leave the West and join the Caliphate in Syria. British Pakistani novelist Kamila Shamsie depicts exactly this scenario in her 2017 novel Home Fire, which rewrites *Antigone* in this context of ISIS and the failed assimilation of British Muslims.

This paper will focus on how British Muslims are interpellated by the English language as terrorists, specifically in the news media and government organization. In *Home Fire,* Kamila Shamsie illustrates this tension between the subject identity of being British but also Muslim. Shamsie utilizes her characters to argue that if the West continues to think of Muslims and other ethnic minorities only as "terrorists," then there will continue to be a failure to integrate Muslim families into society, and they will continue to be targets of radicalization. Through the fate of Parvaiz—the brother in the novel who is recruited to ISIS and tragically dies as a stateless person who cannot return to Britain after realizing his mistake—she illustrates how the West's response to terrorism has fostered an environment for homegrown terrorism. *Home Fire* represents the consequences of the British state interpellating all British-born Muslims as terrorists, thus forcing

one to either conform or rebel. As Shamsie demonstrates, it is impossible to reconcile one's Muslim side with one's British side since the dominant Western culture demands conformity to these binary oppositions without leaving any room for hybridity between these identity categories.

Framing the Narrative of 9/11 and Western Muslims

To contextualize the marginalization of Muslims in Western countries, a study regarding Australian Muslims reflects the detrimental impact September 11th, 2001, had on ethnic tensions and discrimination around the world. At the beginning of the 20th century, the "White Australia" policy was enacted by the *Immigration Restriction Act*. The purpose of this act was to make it much more difficult for immigrants, specifically non-white, non-Christian immigrants, to migrate into the country (Kabir 243). It is important to note that when this act was first enacted in 1901, Australia was still a colony of the British Empire. This act was a method to preserve the "purity" of the country. For a brief period, there was a shift in the latter half of the century when Australia began a multicultural policy to encourage Muslim migrants into the country. As Nahid Afrose Kabir, senior researcher at the International Centre for Muslim and non-Muslim Understanding, describes the "exclusionary policies that referred to colour, language, style of dress or mode of worship were no longer permitted, and ethnic affairs commissions, multicultural education, interpreting services, ethnic broadcasting, and adult migrant English language teacher were supported" (243-244). These policies demonstrate that Australia was on the pathway to encouraging acceptance of Muslims and other ethnic minorities. They promoted tolerance and cultural relativity. Unfortunately, this policy lasted only thirteen years before the government abolished the act. With this change in policy, the country had been pushed several steps back in terms of achieving a positive multicultural society and provides a corollary for British society's similar failure to grapple with Muslim immigrants.

The terrorist attack on 9/11 set a precedent for Muslims around the world. The West's response was to create a division between Muslims and non-Muslims. In their book, *Precarious Life*, Judith Butler contextualizes, "The binarism that Bush proposes in which only two positions are possible- 'Either you're with us or you're with the terrorists'- makes it untenable to hold a position in which one opposes both and queries the terms in which the opposition is framed" (2). Butler directly names the binaries Western Muslims are forced to choose between because of 9/11. Western Muslims become outcasts in their societies, especially if they chose to still portray and follow their traditions. This alienation creates an "us" versus "them" mentality between Muslims

and the rest of the world. Butler continues, "Moreover, it is the same binarism that returns to us an anachronistic division between 'East' and 'West' and which, in its sloshy metonymy, returns us to the invidious distinction between civilization (our own) and barbarism (now coded as 'Islam' itself)" (Butler 2). This attitude the West has towards the East is rooted in the history of the civilizing mission of colonialism. The West considered themselves more "educated," and that it is their responsibility to help the rest of the world by spreading their ideals. Anything that does not obey by Western societal standards is considered "barbaric."

This mindset of the West is also depicted in Edward Said's book, *Orientalism*. Said observes: "Therefore, Orientalism is not a mere political subject matter or field that is reflected passively by culture, scholarship, or institutions nor is it a large and diffuse collection of texts about the Orient; nor is it representative and expressive of some nefarious 'Western' imperialist plot to hold down the 'Oriental' world" (1792). Said explains the West's need to define the East based on norms from the West. They want to create narratives that align with the West's perception of the East to alienate these people further. Said continues, "Indeed, my real argument is that Orientalism is- and does not simply represent- a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with 'our' world" (1793). The West perpetuates stereotypes to deem the East as a cultural "other" because this relationship is the power dynamic that benefits the West. They discredit centuries of traditions, customs, languages, and overall civilization to illustrate the West's narrative of the East.

Violence towards Muslims, especially Muslim women, has become prominent after 9/11. Kabir incorporates interviews from Australian Muslim women about how they were treated before and after 9/11. One respondent recounted, "In 1982, when I decided to wear my *hijab* people's perception of me changed dramatically and there was a lot of negativity around […] the minute I decided to assert my identity and say 'this is how comfortable I feel' … But I was quite, at a personal level, devastated," (48). Prior to 9/11, Muslims were still ostracized by Western society. The mistreatments they faced were more passive-aggressive behavior, calling out racial slurs, and microaggressions. Violence towards them existed, but it was not considered the norm. After 9/11, violence towards Muslim women increased significantly. Kabir summarizes:

> After 9/11, respondents in Sydney, Brisbane and Perth reported on people turning their dogs loose on veiled women, throwing a carton or bottle of milk at them, intimidating them in shopping malls or public places, firing them from their jobs, severing ties with them as

> neighbours when they learnt that they were Muslims, punching in the eye of a Muslim girl (who lost her vision), labelling them as "terrorists" and yelling at them 'go back to al Qaeda!' (254)

Muslims in Western countries had to endure abuse from society because of 9/11 because they were deemed terrorists by the Western media. They had to deal with physical threats from nationalist people because British Muslims are the "cultural others" in Western society. They are no longer considered a part of the multicultural society of the West. They are put at an even more disadvantage because their opportunities, through jobs and networking, are revoked. Fatima Khan analyzes how their ostracization from the West puts British Muslims of Pakistani descent at a major disadvantage. According to Khan, "British-Muslims of Pakistani descent disproportionately live and raise families in deprived areas in mostly social housing linked to conditions of poverty or privately rented housing plagued by its temporary nature and subject to unexpected rent rises and inadequate regulation of both landlords and living conditions" (22). Even without the increase in hate crimes and violence towards Muslims, there has been a significant decrease in their quality of life. They are less likely to own houses, more likely to live in overpriced rental housing at the mercy of their landlords and work poorly paid strenuous jobs with biased employers. These circumstances put them at serious disadvantages for trying to earn a better quality of life.

This tension between the identity categories of British and Muslim and the inability to reconcile the structure of difference is still prevalent throughout the politics of the United Kingdom in the 21st century. Anita Inder Singh, founding professor of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution in New Delhi, analyzes similarities between the two binaries. According to Singh, "In other words, are the ways in which the white majority and Muslims perceive each other the same side of the same coin," (Singh 18). Many people compare Muslims and non-Muslims by discussing how different they are. Singh contradicts this norm by proposing a unique perspective on the struggle between Westernized Muslims and Britons. The Muslims in this scenario may be Muslims that chose to adapt Western culture and values. Singh continues, "If so, then the feeling that Muslims are not British may be shared equally by British Muslims and white Britons, contributing to alienation on both sides," (Singh 18). In this scenario, on the other hand, Singh may be referring to British Muslims who reject Western culture. The consequence of this choice is the alienation from other British Muslims and Western society. The isolation from both sides is reflected within the media. According to Kaveri Qureshi, professor of Social Policy at the University of Edinburgh,

and Benjamin Zeitlyn, professor of International Education and Development at the University of Sussex, "The discursive positioning of Muslims as a 'security threat' has been widely reflected in government policies and the media," (Qureshi and Zeitlyn 111). Essentially, non-assimilating Muslims are perceived as a "security threat" in Britain. They are targeted more than white passing and assimilating Muslims for security checks in airports and other public areas, especially after 9/11. Ultimately, they must perform to normative white British standards so that they appear non-threatening through the eyes of Western society.

Interpellation through Language: The Product of Failed Hybridity

The idea of Muslims being interpellated as a "security threat" is present throughout Shamsie's novel. To first understand the relationship between the subject and language, Louis Althusser's argument concerning ideology must be considered. Althusser defines ideology and emphasizes how it governs the subject, which is a prevalent theme in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*. Althusser illustrates this relationship in *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses:*

> Ideology, then, is for Marx an imaginary assemblage (*bricolage*), a pure dream, empty and vain, constituted by the day's residues' from the only full and positive reality, that of the concrete history of concrete material individuals materially producing their existence, It is on this basis that ideology has no history in *The German Ideology*, since its history is outside it, where the only existing history is the history of concrete individuals, etc. (1349)

Althusser builds on Karl Marx's definition of ideology to add the emphasis on hegemony. Marx, according to Althusser, focuses on ideology as an abstract force in society. It is merely a dream constructed by the people that illustrates the invisible forces that produce the material differences in class divisions. Althusser builds on Marx by further theorizing ideology in more concrete terms. Instead of being a pure dream, he argues that ideology appears in the form of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) and Regressive State Apparatuses (RSAs). He explains, "All ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects, by the functioning of the category of the subject," (Althusser 1356). Ideology hails people as specific subjects through discourse and hegemonic norms. Althusser further explains this concept by introducing the relationship between the ISAs and the RSAs. The ISA is any force that indirectly or passively governs the subjects. An example of an ISA is religion. Every religion has their own set of rules and customs that its followers should live by. In contrast, the RSA is any means of violence or force that is used to govern the public. An example an RSA is the Home Office because the purpose of it is to control

terrorism and domestic threats to Britain. This unwilling interpellation of the characters is illustrated in *Home Fire*.

While Althusser theorizes about how subjects are determined by language, Jacques Derrida theorizes the way in which language can make room for difference and agency within these systems of discourse. Derrida takes Saussure's foundation of structuralism and pushes it even further by developing his own branch of structuralism: deconstruction. Derrida explains the concept of deconstruction in his book, *Margins of Philosophy*: "In a language, in the *system* of language, there are only differences. Therefore, a taxonomical operation can undertake the systematic, statistical, and classificatory inventory of a language," (11). Here, he follows Saussure's idea that language is a system of differences. The difference between Saussure and Derrida, however, is that Derrida breaks the individual words down to their most basic form: letters. Derrida argues that the meaning lies between the two binary oppositions. Derrida presents an example of his deconstructive method by analyzing the words "différence" and "différance." Derrida notes, "I can speak of this graphic difference only through a very indirect discourse on writing, and on the condition that I specify, each time, whether I am referring to difference with an *e* or *différance* with an *a,*" (4). In speech, there is no difference in pronunciation between these two words. The only way the listener knows which word was said is through context clues as the difference can only be observed through writing. His concept relates to Saussure because something as small as one letter can change the signified and in consequence, change the sign. Consequently, this relationship highlights the multiple meanings and contradictions within language. Derrida further elaborates, "There is no essence of *différence*; it (is) that which not only could never be appropriated in the *as such* of its appearing, but also that which threatens the authority of the *as such* in general, of the presence of the thing itself in its essence," (Derrida 25-26). Ultimately, meaning is only relational; it is determined by language and cultural determinations with a man-made, culturally determined system of language within binaries. In relation to the novel, the characters exist as a hybrid between the binaries of British and Muslim. Ultimately, there is no difference between a British Muslim and a British Christian, until one starts factoring in Western ideologies.

British and Muslim: Avoiding the Western Gaze

In the novel's opening scene, Isma, a British citizen, is hailed as a domestic threat during her interrogation with London airport security. Isma is interpellated as a terrorist for simply being

a Muslim and entering an airport. She is aware of the systematic racism and, as a result, prepares answers to the security guard's questions with her sister, Aneeka, prior to her flight. The narrator describes, "She'd made sure not to pack anything that would invite comment or questions- no Quran, no family pictures, no books on her area of academic interest- but even so, the officer took hold of every item of Isma's clothing and ran it between her thumb and fingers," (Shamsie 3). She had to tell them information about her studies in the United States and her family history; she is not allowed to have privacy with them. Isma must cooperate and behave exactly how they expect her to if she wants to leave airport security without handcuffs. Zachary Vincent Bordas analyzes this scene through a Foucauldian lens: "Isma, by not packing certain items, anticipates that she will be stereotyped and forced to undergo a discriminatory screening, which prompts her attempt to manipulate what the TSA will assume of her. She has no intention of evil, but she assumes that she will need to prove her innocence" (127). While analyzing this scene with an Althussian perspective, Isma is the subject in this scenario, and the airport security is the ISA. Isma must adhere to the security, even though they are stereotyping her. The security is not using excessive violence against Isma to deem her as their subject. They hail her as a terrorist; thus, they question her intensely.

As the interrogation continues, Isma follows all the necessary actions to seem nonthreatening. The narrator describes, "The official was doing that thing that she'd encountered before in security personnel- staying quiet when you answered their question in a straightforward manner, which made you think you had to say more. And the more you said, the more guilty you sounded," (Shamsie 4). Bordas notes, "Isma understands how the TSA operates, which is why she hides certain aspects of her personhood from their gaze, yet she has nothing to hide about her intents. […] She is categorized by a system outside her control" (127). Isma lives in a disciplinarian society, a metaphorical panopticon. She is the prisoner that has her every move watched by a guard in a tower. She has to try her best to appear as a non-threat if she wants to survive. This scene illustrates that Isma will be hailed no matter how she presents herself. She cannot exist as both a British and Muslim citizen; she must choose only one to identify with.

The struggle concerning how language constructs the Western British Muslims indirectly isolates them from the rest of the country. For example, Isma highlights the media's hypocrisy when the media describes British terrorists. She notes, "The 7/7 terrorists were never described by the media as 'British terrorists.' Even when the word 'British' was used, it was always 'British of

Pakistani descent' or 'British Muslim' or, my favorite, 'British passport holders,' always something interposed between their Britishness and terrorism," (Shamsie 40). The media directly implies that even if these people are born in Britain, they will never truly be considered British citizens. This language creates an "us versus them" mentality and ostracizes British Muslims from society. Using Derrida's deconstructive method, one will notice how this language separates Muslims from British society. These terrorists are not British citizens; they are simply people who just so happen to possess British passports. They are not regular British citizens; they are "British of Pakistani descent" and "British Muslims" (Shamsie 40). The issue with this language is that it denies the existence of homegrown terrorism. According to the media, nothing that could have been done to prevent them from turning to terrorism, because they are already born into it. The media perpetuates negative stereotypes against Muslims in the West. Thus, Muslims are forced to assimilate to Western norms and expectations if they do not want to be hailed as terrorists, creating a division in the Muslim community.

Although Isma is a more traditional Muslim, as demonstrated by her wearing a hijab and reciting prayers in Arabic, she still tries to appear non-threatening to the eyes of the Western world. She demonstrates her loyalty to the West when she learns that her brother, Parvaiz, joined the Caliphate. She turns in Parvaiz to the government, and Aneeka, her sister and Parvaiz's twin, is furious because it is now impossible for him to ever return home. Isma defends, "We're in no position to let the state question our loyalties. Don't you understand that? If you cooperate, it makes a difference. I wasn't going to let him make you suffer for the choices he'd made" (Shamsie 44). Isma justifies her actions because she cannot let the government question her loyalty. She had to protect herself and Aneeka because it was already too late for her to protect Parvaiz. Isma is forced to choose between her family and Britain, and she chooses Britain because she knows the consequences. This scene also demonstrates that Isma polices her own actions because of she is a victim of the ISAs. Debjani Banerjee, in the context of Isma policing herself and her own family, explains: "Aimed at solving the problem of the homegrown terrorist, the focus of these policies was almost entirely on Muslim communities. By encouraging family members to prioritize security over family allegiances, PREVENT [Preventing Violent Extremism Policy] managed to create conflict within families and justify that in the name of nationalism" (296). Essentially, Banerjee argues that Britain's post 9/11 policies pushed for the division of families in the name of nationalism. Their goal is to prevent future terrorism before it occurs, but the issue is that they

determine who is more of a risk based on ethnic and ideological signifiers. Characters with more Western ideologies, like Eamonn and Karamat, are less likely to be flagged by the government for suspicious behavior. Other characters with less-than-ideal backgrounds, like Parvaiz, are immediately perceived as a threat.

Eamonn and Karamat

The character Karamat, who is the son of Pakistani immigrants who has risen to become Home Secretar, is an extreme example of a British Muslim who chooses to identify primarily with his British side and repress any ethnic heritage. Isma recalls the news outlets the day he was appointed as Home Secretary. According to her, "The accompanying article described the newly elevated minister as a man 'from a Muslim background,' which is what they always said about him, as through Muslim-ness was something he had boldly stridden away from. Inevitably, the sentence went on to use the phrase 'strong on security'" (Shamsie 35). Isma observes that if a British Muslim is appointed a place of high status in parliament, they must distance themselves from their Muslim identity. British Muslims will never be able to exist as a hybrid of the two cultural binaries regardless of their personal backgrounds. Rehana Ahmed, coins the term "hyperperformative" to describe this scenario in both the novel and the real world. Ahmed argues, "The novel's emphasis on performance and surveillance highlights the role of the visual in shaping or entrenching perceptions of others, and thereby entrenching barriers between cultural groups, or impeding communication across them" (1153). The increased surveillance of Muslims after 9/11 has caused some Western Muslims to desperately appeal to the Western norms so they are not deemed suspicious. They are referred to as hyperperformative because they go above and beyond to prove that they "are not like the bad Muslims".

Both Eamonn and his father, Karamat, display hyperperformative tendencies as they assimilate to British society. Eamonn tells Isma:

> "It's harder for him, [his father]" he said. "Because of his background. Early on, in particular, he had to be more careful than any other MP, and at times that meant doing things he regretted. But everything he did, even the wrong choices, were because he had a sense of purpose. Public service, national good, British values. He deeply believes in these things. All the wrong choices he made, they were necessary to get him to the right place, the place he is now." (53)

Eamonn admits that his father was treated differently as a Muslim in Parliament. Consequently, he had to appeal to the privileged white voters of Britain to secure his position. More people were watching him to see if he made any mistake; they were watching him to see if he displayed complete loyalty to Britain. Eamonn even emphasizes "British values" while discussing his father's actions. He had to prove himself to be an upstanding British citizen, i.e., a model minority. Karamat's actions, however, caused many Muslim-identifying British Muslims to feel that he betrayed them. Eamonn elaborates, "It was London's Muslim population who had turned their back on Karamat Lone and voted him out, despite all the good he'd done for his constituents" (61). Many would assume that British Muslims would support Karamat in Parliament because he would represent them. However, this assumption is false because Karamat lost the approval and favor of British Muslims by trying so hard to appeal to the White Britons. He indirectly enforced stereotypes that Muslims faced in Britain. He supported laws and regulations that antagonized non-assimilating Muslims. Eamonn also believes that there is nothing wrong with his father's actions. To him, his father had to do what was necessary to survive in Western civilization.

Eamonn also begins to display internalized racism immediately after defending his father. He defends his father in his inner monologue, explaining, "All because he'd expressed a completely enlightened preference for the conventions of a church over those of a mosque and spoke of the need for British Muslims to lift themselves out of the Dark Ages if they wanted the rest of the nation to treat them with respect" (Shamsie 61). Banerjee perfectly contextualizes the problem and controversial aspects of utilizing the Dark Ages versus the Enlightenment as an allegory. Banerjee elaborates, "This binary of Dark Ages and Enlightenment is one that the text borrows from public discourses of the time. Distilled understanding from these easy binaries was that Britishness as a value had to be instilled into young men and women" (295). In this scenario, the West is similar to the Enlightenment because Western citizens believe they are helping Muslims, and other ethnic minorities, by educating them and forcing them to uphold British values. Muslims are similar to the Dark Ages, according to Western ideology, because they fail to assimilate Western culture and knowledge. They are interpellated as subhuman because they are not fully British citizens. This ideology dates back to the civilizing mission of the colonial era, with the West determining the binaries in this scenario, then and now.

Karamat encourages the division of Muslims even while giving a speech to Muslim youths. He tells the children, "'There is nothing this country won't allow you to achieve—Olympic

medals, captaincy of the cricket team, pop stardom, reality TV crowns. And if none of that works out, you can settle for being home secretary. You are, we are, British. Britain accepts this. So do most of you'" (Shamsie 89-90). Here, Karamat tells the students that they have the free will to do anything they want to because they are British citizens. They can become celebrities, pursue education, and become "full" British subjects. He points out to the students that the British are on their sides, not against them. They just have to behave like model minority citizens and follow Western customs and norms. He portrays Britain in an idealistic light of a neoliberal multicultural fantasy. The tone shifts when Karamat addresses the Muslims who choose to continue to practice their traditions. He says:

> "But for those of you who are in some doubt about it, let me say this: Don't set yourself apart in the way you dress, the way you think, the outdated codes of behavior you cling to, the ideologies to which you attach your loyalties. Because if you do, you will be treated differently- not because of racism, though that does still exist, but because you insist on your difference from everyone else in this multiethnic, multireligious, multitudinous United Kingdom of ours. And look at all you miss out because of it." (Shamsie 89)

Karamat tells the Muslim children that they must assimilate to Western culture. They should not dress or think in a way that will set them apart from British citizens. Essentially, they must try not to appear Muslim. He refers to their traditions as "outdated codes of behavior." This phrase is problematic because it hails traditional Muslims as barbaric in comparison to Western-assimilating Muslims. Karamat tells the students that if they stick with their traditional values, they are ostracizing themselves from the rest of Britain. He refers to Britain as multicultural, multireligious, and multitudinous. These words are his way of reminding the students that Britain is full of people with different ethnicities and religions; it is their fault if they choose to separate themselves. He puts the Muslim children in a complicated position. They have the free will to choose to uphold their Muslim traditions, but they will face repercussions as a result. The children must choose between one of the two binaries, instead of existing between.

Interpellation through Language: Through Parvaiz's Lens

On the exact opposite end of the British-Muslim spectrum from Karamat and Eamonn lies Parvaiz. Parvaiz primarily identifies with his British Muslim side; he does not follow the exact norms that a model British citizen would display. This aspect of his character, and being the son of a terrorist, labels Parvaiz as an "Other" in British society. Kwame Anthony Appiah summarizes

the consequences of having a negative label attached to one's identity. He writes, "And so an important form of struggle over identity occurs when people challenge the assumptions that lead to unequal distributions of power. The world is full of burdensome identities, whose price is that other people treat you with disrespect" (11). Parvaiz's ostracization from society is a consequence of the labels he has attached to him. He is not fully British because he is Muslim. He faces the consequences physically in the scene where Parvaiz is jumped by his childhood friend, Abdul. The narrator describes, "Parvaiz lay on the ground of the car park, waiting for the pain to pass, as the boys' car screeched past him. The sound envelope: slow attack, short sustain, long decay. Nothing to hear that he hadn't heard before. How he hated his life, the neighborhood, the inevitability of everything" (125). The narrator's tone in this scene is utter defeat. Parvaiz has lost all hope; he knows he will never be fully accepted into British society. Notably, the one that attacked Parvaiz was also a Muslim; he is not even accepted by his own people. Parvaiz hates his life in Britain and feels that he has no agency in anything that happens to him.

Parvaiz's absent father also affected him greatly throughout his childhood. The narrator remarks, "He'd grown up knowing that his father was a shameful secret, one that must be kept from the world outside or else posters would appear around Preston Road with the line no *DO YOU KNOW WHO YOUR NEIGHBORS ARE?* and rocks would be thrown through windows" (Shamsie 128). The Pasha family knows that they would be attacked by society if it was ever revealed to the public that their father was a British citizen who became a terrorist, regardless of whether he was in their life. They would have been labeled threats immediately for the possibility of associating with him. The siblings would be under the watchful eyes of the public, waiting for them to fail so they could be exiled completely from society. Parvaiz's isolation was not limited to the house. According to the narrator, "His mother and Isma both carried an anger towards Adil Pasha too immense for words, and as for Aneeka, her complete lack of feeling or curiosity about their father had been the first definite sign that he and his sister were two, not one" (Shamsie 128-129). Parvaiz was alone with his curiosity about his father. He wondered about what could have been and what caused his father to turn to terrorism. For Parvaiz, ignoring the topic of his father did nothing to eliminate his trauma. He was desperate for anything about his father to prove that he was more than a terrorist.

Parvaiz is preyed upon by an ISIS recruiter because of his desperation, which becomes evident to the reader throughout his interactions with Farooq. Parvaiz initially befriends Farooq in

hopes of learning more about his father. Farooq uses his knowledge of Parvaiz's father to manipulate Parvaiz into following his orders. He tells Parvaiz, "Do you think he wanted the world to be as it is? No. But he saw it for what it is. And having seen it he understood that a man has larger responsibilities than the ones his wife and mother want to chain him to" (Shamsie 131). Considering Parvaiz's relationship with his father during his childhood, his father is the perfect manipulation tactic to get through him. Parvaiz never knew him, and he had to live with the narrative MI6 gave him that his father was a terrorist who was killed in Guantanamo Bay. He had to deal with people questioning him about his father throughout his life. Farooq knew exactly what to say to Parvaiz to convince him to join ISIS. He told Parvaiz, "When he entered the fight for justice he called himself Father of Parvaiz. That was his way of keeping you close. So anytime someone said his name- his enemies, with fear; his brothers, with love; his comrades, with honor- they were saying your name too" (Shamsie 127). Farooq describes Parvaiz's father as a martyr, who died for a greater good. These words were most likely what Parvaiz has wanted to hear ever since he was a child: his father was more than a terrorist. Parvaiz chose to follow Farooq to Raqqa because Farooq knew how to interpellate him into an ideology that gave his life more meaning than the lack of assimilation he was feeling as a British Muslim.

After Parvaiz endures the initiation, Farooq tells him, "You're strong enough to bear this. You're his son, after all," (Shamsie 141). Farooq realizes that Parvaiz's father is the only thing that can truly convince Parvaiz to join him. Thus, he mentions his father constantly and uses photographs to remind Parvaiz why he joined. This manipulation succeeds in getting Parvaiz to leave London and go to Raqqa. However, the manipulation ultimately fails whenever Parvaiz witnesses his first beheading. He is not able to stomach it and is unable to watch it at first. He believes he failed Allah in doing so. As a result, "For days and days after that, he [Parvaiz] worked in the studio on sound effects of beheadings, crucifixions, whipping. This was both a test and a punishment. In the studio, he had control of himself. Abstracting himself to that place where nothing but getting the sound right mattered," (Shamsie 173). Parvaiz has fallen deep enough into their trap that he believes that he has become his own authoritative figure. He is pushing himself to listen to the gory and explicit videos so he will perform better at his duty. His actions demonstrate his hybridity because he cannot stomach the most extreme ISIS ideological norms. He is unable to break from his Western roots since he is still a London-raised citizen. Parvaiz's story tragically ends when he dies in Turkey while trying to seek help from a British consulate in

Istanbul. He is permanently trapped between the identity categories because he cannot return to either London or Raqqa.

Reassessing the Two Binaries

Parvaiz experiences an example of an RSA while he is in Raqqa. While walking in the city, he encounters a woman who is being punished by the Hisba, or "the morality police" (Shamsie 176). The woman begs for help, and Parvaiz recognizes her British accent. He feels a connection with her because he is reminded of Aneeka. This parallel between the woman in the scene illustrates Derrida's usage of difference. Through Parvaiz, Shamsie is depicting that there is nothing inherently different between a British Muslim in London and a British Muslim trapped in Raqqa. Like the British government, however, who interpellates all Muslims as terrorists, ISIS interpellates everyone in Raqqa as jihidi/Islamic fundamentalist. He wants to help the woman, but he is told that this violence is her punishment for unveiling her face. The narrator elaborates, "There were a great many things he could say right then, and all but one of them would get him killed," (Shamsie 177). This scene depicts the RSA in two different ways. First, the Hisba serves as an RSA because they are inflicting violence upon a woman for unveiling her face. The woman is left to suffer as a result of her punishment, and her punishment is done publicly to make a statement of her. This scenario demonstrates the limitations of agency that the subject has under ISIS. The woman chose to unveil her face and had to suffer the consequences at the hands of the Hisba. The RSA is also depicted when Parvaiz realizes that anything he could attempt to do to help the woman will result in him being killed. No violence is inflicted upon him, but there is a threat of violence. Parvaiz fears the Hisba and follows Sharia Law in response, as evident in his call with Aneeka. Parvaiz thinks, "It would have to be a voice call rather than a video call so that no one might look in through the window and see him talking to an unveiled woman," (Shamsie 178). If Parvaiz wants to survive, he has to follow their rules, even in his personal phone calls with his sister. He does have free will, in that he can choose to disobey Sharia Law. However, the consequences for disobeying ensure there is no option to exist between the binaries of jihadi and British cultural heritage, if Parvaiz wants to survive.

The Impossibility of Hybridity

Shamsie ultimately argues in her novel that British Muslims cannot exist as a hybrid between the two sides of the binary; they must choose one or the other. Three characters in the novel best represent failed hybridity: Parvaiz, Aneeka, and Eamonn. Parvaiz's final moments are

tragic. Eamonn describes his death as, “I knew Parvaiz Pasha was trying to get to the British consulate in Istanbul- not for sine act of terrorism but because he wanted a new passport that would allow him to return home” (Shamsie 257-258). Parvaiz regretted his decision to join ISIS. He desperately wanted an escape and tried to seek assistance from the British consulates. He is killed while he is approaching the consulate; it is not clear if he was murdered by a Jihadi or a Briton. Eamonn further notes the similarities between the British government and the Jihadis in relation to forcing subjects to choose a binary. He exclaims, “While her brother was alive that love was turned toward convincing him to return home; now he’s dead it’s turned to convincing the government to return his body home” (Shamsie 258). In the beginning and middle of the novel, Aneeka was not able to bring her brother home because the Jihadis had trapped him, and the British government refused to assist him because of his affiliation with the Jihadis. After his death, the British government refused to let his sister bring his body home to be buried because they wanted to use him to make a statement, just as Creon does with Polynices’s body in *Antigone*.

In the ending of the novel, both Aneeka and Eamonn are in Pakistan. Aneeka had been there protesting the British government and seeking justice to return her brother’s corpse to the UK. Eamonn arrives later to support her. Before Eamonn approaches Aneeka, a man embraces him. Eamonn does not want to offend these people because he is unfamiliar with the place and a foreigner. Suddenly, the man straps a bomb around Eamonn’s chest. The park is vacated immediately, and no one can help free Eamonn. Aneeka only notices his presence when he tells her to run away from him. The narrator states:

> The man with the explosives around his waist holds up both his hands to stop her from coming to him. “Run!” he shouts. “Get away from me, run!” And run she does, crashing right into him, a judder of the camera as the man holding it on his shoulder flinches in expectation of a blast. (Shamsie 274)

Both Aneeka and Eamonn are trapped between the two binaries. Aneeka could not choose to agree with the British because that would ultimately mean abandoning her brother. She would be siding with the people that were actively working against her. She could not choose her Muslim side because she assimilates with the British lifestyle. Eamonn, on the other hand, was living his life comfortably in the binary as a British citizen. He abandoned it in honor of his love for Aneeka; he believed that he would be able to support her and return to their normal lives in Britain. They are

ultimately punished for trying to live in between the two binaries. Their struggle with hybridity ends once they are both killed. The final sentences from the novel are:

> At first the man in the navy shirt struggles, but her arms are around him, she whispers something, and he stops. She rests her cheek against his, he drops his head to kiss her shoulder. For a moment they are two lovers in a park, under an ancient tree, sun-dappled, beautiful, and at peace. (Shamsie 274)

At first glance, this ending may seem to be romantic to some readers. They died together and got to have their final moments embracing each other. This ending has pessimistic undertones, however, because the only way Eamonn and Aneeka can achieve true hybridity and exist peacefully is in the instant of their death. After death, they are free from the influence of the ISAs and the RSAs. They are free from the bounds of language but cannot achieve this peace during their lifetimes in either society.

In sum, *Home Fire* illustrates the binaries British Muslims are caught between. On the one hand, they could choose to assimilate to Western culture. This choice ensures their safety because they are perceived as non-threatening. They are provided more job opportunities because they are perceived as more "educated" than the rest of their community, as evidenced by references of the Dark Ages and the Enlightenment. The consequence of this decision is that the rest of their community is that non-conforming Muslims feel betrayed, as demonstrated with Karamat's rise in Parliament and his relationship with the rest of the Muslim community. On the other hand, non-conforming Muslim's are ostracized from the rest of British society. They are perceived as "security threats" because they do not uphold Western values, as evident through the treatment of the Pasha siblings throughout the novel. They are labeled "barbaric" and dehumanized in the eyes of Western civilization. The dehumanization is especially apparent with the necropolitics surrounding Parvaiz and Aneeka's desire for the government to return his body so he can receive a proper burial. Ultimately, Shamsie argues that, as of right now, those who try to exist in between the binaries will be caught in the crossfire and punished. The tragic ending of the novel implies that Shamsie is not optimistic about this ending changing in the future, but perhaps the language of the novel can pave a way for a future in which characters like these can achieve peace in the world outside the pages of fiction.

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The Byzantines Rediscovered: The Historiography of the Forgotten Romans

Lane Gentry

In the early morning hours of May 29, 1453, the Queen of Cities fell for the final time. The massive guns of the Ottoman Turks were too much for the ancient walls to handle and Constantinople fell to the foreign invaders. The Byzantine (or Eastern Roman) Empire had been destroyed and its memory was soon relegated to the pages of history. One would think that the end of a millennia spanning empire would be the catalyst for a major examination of its history and all of its complexities. Instead of this, this empire that had once held dominion from Northern England to Mesopotamia was quickly forgotten. The contributions it made to European culture were gladly accepted by those who yearned to read the classical texts it had kept safe, but credit was given to others. This Empire which had once been the height of civilization was now being demoted to a mere footnote if it was lucky enough to be mentioned at all. How could this be? How could the Byzantine Empire be so easily forgotten by the West it helped forge and protect? To answer this question, we should not look to the history of Eastern Rome itself, but to the history of how historians (specifically Western Historians) have endeavored to examine the Byzantines. By analyzing these historians and their historiographical frameworks, we can trace the study of Byzantium from 1453 to 2021.

The historiography of the Byzantine Empire began with eyewitnesses to the Fall of Constantinople and their immediate descendants writing about the catastrophe in an attempt to garner Western support for a reconquest of their home. The West, however, would use history to discredit the Empire. Centuries-old divisions between Greek and Latin, Catholic and Orthodox, and East and West still lingered in historians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries who either ignored the Byzantines entirely or spoke of them in nothing but harsh derision. Orientalism and European preconceptions of what it meant to be "Eastern" further muddied the waters and further relegated the study of Eastern Rome to obscurity. Interest in the empire would gain popularity among scholars in the twentieth century, who began to take the Byzantines seriously again and pioneered the field of Byzantine Studies. While these early twentieth century pioneers mainly focused on military and political history, recent historians have begun to look at the Byzantine Empire through the lenses of culture, religion, class, and more. Today, the field of Byzantine

Studies is finally getting the chance to be a legitimate subfield of history, one which is full of debate and discourse.

Before moving forward, it is important to note here the biases of the author. At the conclusion of this historiographical study, I will examine two of the major debates in Byzantine history as well as my position in these debates. I will outline what exactly these questions are, and the disagreements historians have. However, I believe it is important to note here, at the beginning, that my opinions on these important questions inform the way I write. For example, I use the terms "Byzantine", "Eastern Roman", and "Roman" interchangeably. Some historians believe these are different terms with different meanings and some believe they are the same. I will go into more detail on these issues when the time comes, but for now, it should be kept in the back of the mind that I am writing this from my perspective of Byzantine history.

The first people to write about the Byzantine Empire after its fall were the eyewitnesses and survivors of May 29, 1453. After its capture by the Muslim Turks, many Greeks fled Constantinople from the former Byzantine lands to become refugees in Western Europe. Among these were the former bureaucrats and courtiers of the last Roman Emperor Constantine XI who vividly wrote of their experiences. These men were Thomas the Eparch, Joshua Diplovatatzes, and George Sphrantzes. Together, they provide a detailed account of the events leading up to and including the Fall of Constantinople and its aftermath. It becomes important at this juncture to inquire as to why these chronicles were written. The easy answer would be that they were written to inform the rest of the world that the city of Constantine had fallen. After all, the advent of the instant twenty-four-hour news cycle was still some ways off. There does appear to be another motive, however, and that was to garner Western European support for a reconquest of Byzantium.

When they heard of Constantinople's fall to the Ottomans the reaction of Western Europe was one of shock and horror, but also apathy. Pope Nicholas V issued a Papal Bull on September 30th, 1453 calling the rulers of Europe to Crusade against the Turks, but the Western rulers were too busy with their own problems to spare any aid to the Byzantine exiles.[56] This didn't stop Byzantine refugees from using the woeful tale of Constantinople's destruction and the heroic death of Constantine XI to try and garner sympathy for themselves and support for a Crusade. How they told the story of the siege point to these goals. Firstly, is the depiction of the numerous atrocities

[56] Steven Runciman, *1453: The Fall of Constantinople* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 165-166.

committed by the Turks during the sack of Constantinople. Thomas the Eparch gave many examples of these acts in his account, including the rape and murder of innocent civilians:

> Then he seized one of the Grand Duke's daughters who was quite beautiful and made her lie on the great altar of Hagia Sophia with a crucifix under her head and then raped her. Then the most brutish of the Turks seized the finest noble women, virgins, and nuns of the city and violated them in the presence of the Greeks and in sacrilege of Christianity… They also wanted to desecrate the image of the Virgin of St Luke by stabbing six hundred people in front of it, one after another, like madmen.[57]

Included in the chronicle of George Sphrantzes focused on the heroic deeds of the last Emperor of the Romans, Constantine XI, in the hope that his example would inspire European Christians. In his account of the night before the Fall of Constantinople, Sphrantzes includes a lengthy speech given by Constantine XI to his army that reads like something out of an epic historical movie. In this speech, Constantine XI makes a point of thanking the Venetian and Genovese soldiers that had joined the defenders of Constantinople:

> my dearest brothers in Christ, courageous men, experienced and seasoned fighters! Often have you dealt death to the multitude of the sons of Hagar with your shining swords and grace; their blood has flown in streams at your hands. I implore you today to become, with all your soul, the defenders of this City caught in the misfortunes of such a war; for you have come to know her as your second homeland and mother forever. Once more I ask and beg you to act in this hour as loyal allies, fellow Christians, and brothers.[58]

Whether or not these are the actual words of Constantine XI or an apocryphal addition by Sphrantzes, its inclusion in this account can be seen as a way of trying to gain Venetian and Genovese support for the planned Crusade. Constantine is seen to be reminding the West of their shared Christian heritage and their past support as well as asking them to continue this support in his darkest hour. This speech makes for not only a dramatic and tragic scene, but also a propaganda piece aimed at drumming up Western support.

It was also during this period, the years immediately after 1453, that several people who were related to or claimed to be related to the last emperor and his Palaiologoi Dynasty traveled

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[57] Thomas the Eparch and Joshua Diplovatatzes, *Account of the Taking of Constantinople*, trans. William L. North (Milan: Mondadori Editore, 1976), 236.
[58] George Sphrantzes, *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire: A Chronicle by George Sphrantzes 1401-1477*, trans. Marios Philippides (Amherst: University of Boston Press, 1980) 123-124.

around Western Europe using their claims to garner support. These people would travel to every corner of Europe and claim to be the heirs of the Palaiologoi and the true heirs of Eastern Rome. Jonathan Harris, an English professor of the History of Byzantium, writes of these exiled princes and princesses in an article for *The Sixteenth Century Journal*. He writes that while many historians like to make fun of some of the wackier claims to Byzantine royalty, these claimants should be taken seriously as many of these Greek exiles adopted these titles because they "provided a way of reminding the host population of the sufferings that the Christian Balkan population had undergone as the result of their conquest by the Ottoman Turks and hence became a means of gaining sympathy and support".[59] These people, including Thomas Palaiologos (the younger brother of Constantine XI), would travel to the various courts of Europe with papal indulgences in hand asking the kings and princes of the West to aid them in the upcoming Crusade that would never happen.[60] The survivors of the Fall of Constantinople and their immediate descendants used the memory of their homeland as well as their lineage to its Emperors (real or imagined) in vain attempts to move the hearts of Western leaders to action so that Byzantium might live again. This was not to be, however, and as the generations of the Greek Diaspora passed away the memory of the Byzantine Empire was left to Western historians would prove disastrous to the legacy of Eastern Rome.

One of the most prominent historians who contended with the memory of Byzantium was the eighteenth-century English historian Edward Gibbon (1737-1794). He received a spotty primary education due to his bouts of illness and spent fourteen months at Oxford where he did little of note other than converting to Catholicism, prompting his father to remove him from university and place him under the tutelage of a reformed minister after which he promptly re-converted to Protestantism.[61] Gibbon is considered to be one of the founders of history as an academic discipline and his influence in the field is immense. Edward Gibbon is most famous for his groundbreaking six-volume masterpiece *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, which exhaustively recounts Roman history from the second century A.D to the Fall of

[59] Jonathan Harris, "Despots, Emperors, and Balkan Identity in Exile," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 44, no. 3 (2013): 644.
[60] Harris, "Despots", 650.
[61] Mortimer J. Adler, "Introduction" in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* by Edward Gibbon (London: Strahan & Cadell, 1776), v.

Constantinople in 1453. While this work is considered to be one of the finest in the history of history, its influence would bury Byzantium for almost two hundred years.

Gibbon did not hold a high view of the Byzantines. In fact, he treated them with derision and disdain. In the forty-eighth chapter of *Decline and Fall*, Gibbon makes his feelings on the Byzantines known,

> At every step, as we sink deeper in the decline and fall of the Eastern empire, the annals of each succeeding reign would impose a more ungrateful and melancholy task. These annals must continue to repeat a tedious and uniform tale of weakness and misery… But the subjects of the Byzantine empire, who assume and dishonour the names both of Greeks and Romans, present a dread uniformity of abject vices, which are neither softened by the weakness of humanity nor animated by the vigour of memorable crimes.[62]

Gibbon is clear in his opinion of the Byzantines; he finds them to be weak, dishonorable, full of vice, and he is bored at the thought of having to slog through their history. Gibbon speaks of the Byzantine Empire, one of the most vibrant and dynamic empires to have ever existed the same way a bored student would talk about anything in their history class. Why does Gibbon, who spent years of his life writing about the history of Rome, have such disdain for such a large part of its history?

The answer can be discovered by examining the philosophical movements of his time. The mid-eighteenth century was the height of the Age of Enlightenment, a philosophical movement that sought to apply scientific principles of reason and rational thought to all aspects of human endeavor. This manifested itself in many ways across many disciplines. As far as the field of history is concerned, Enlightenment historians were heavily critical of all things having to do with the Middle Ages and with Christianity. Edward Gibbon, being a son of the Enlightenment, was fully on board with both of these positions. The Enlightenment held itself as the pinnacle of reason, sophistication, and history itself. Viewing the Middle Ages through these lenses caused them to see that period as backward, superstitious, and primitive compared to themselves. In chapter seventy-one, Gibbon says of his previous chapters on the medieval era of Roman history, “In the preceding volumes of this History, I have described the triumph of barbarism and religion”.[63] In

[62] Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* Vol. II, ed. Mortimer J. Adler (London: Strahan & Cadell, 1776), 161.
[63] Gibbon, *Decline and Fall* Vol. II, 592.

his mind, the Middle Ages was an era of savagery and superstition compared to his age of civilization and reason.

Gibbon was also well known for his dislike of Christianity, and it shows in his works. He places the Christian religion as being one of the causes of the Fall of the Western Roman Empire. He writes in his "General Observations":

> we may hear without surprise or scandal that the introduction, or at least the abuse of Christianity, had some influence on the decline and fall of the Roman empire… the attention of the emperors was diverted from camps to synods; the Roman world was oppressed by a new species of tyranny; and the persecuted became the secret enemies of their country.[64]

Gibbon blamed Christianity for the decline in Roman military prowess, the corruption of its leaders, and the destruction of its economy. Whether or not this is an accurate assessment of the decline of Western Rome is an argument for another day, but what is relevant is that Gibbon's negative views on both the Middle Ages and Christianity deeply impacted how he treated Eastern Rome in his writings. The Byzantine Empire was a medieval empire and a deeply Christian society, where there was no separation between church and state. For someone like Edward Gibbon, that was the worst thing a state could be. Unfortunately for Byzantium, Gibbon's works would be hailed as instant classics and have an immediate and profound effect on the burgeoning academic discipline known as history. It is largely thanks to Edward Gibbon that serious scholarship concerning the Byzantine Empire would be virtually nonexistent throughout the next century and a half.

After Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, there would be no major work directly dealing with the Byzantine Empire until the mid-twentieth century. As the field of history was finally becoming a true academic discipline, Byzantium was tossed aside and regarded as little more than an ugly footnote. The Irish historian and political theorist William E. H. Lecky makes this sentiment clear in his book *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne*:

> Of that Byzantine Empire the universal verdict of history is that it constitutes, with scarcely an exception, the most thoroughly base and despicable form that civilisation has yet assumed. Though very crue and very sensual, there have been times when cruelty assumed more ruthless, and sensuality more extravagant, aspects; but there has been no other enduring civilisation so absolutely destitute of all the forms and elements of greatness, and

[64] Gibbon, *Decline and Fall* Vol. I, 631.

> none to which the epithet *mean* may be so emphatically applied. The Byzantine Empire was pre-eminently the age of treachery. Its vices were the vices of men who had ceased to be brave without learning to be virtuous.[65]

Lecky's paragraph, likely influenced by Gibbon, was the only significant mention of the Byzantines I could find in nineteenth-century scholarship. There are several reasons for this, but I argue that the most important reason is orientalism.

Orientalism is a trend in nineteenth century Western European intellectual and artistic circles that became obsessed with all things having to do with "the Orient", which refers to the lands of the middle east modern-day Turkey (still the Ottoman Empire in this time), the Levant, and Egypt. The twentieth century Palestinian historian Edward Said, in his landmark book *Orientalism*, outlines what this obsession looked like for Europeans:

> Orientalism is a style of thought based upon the ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident." Thus a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, "mind," destiny, and so on.[66]

Orientalism, as Said describes it, is a Western European movement in which privileged Westerners fawn over their romanticized ideas of what "the orient" is. Being from "the Orient", Said was in a unique position to understand what Orientalism was and its relationship to those on both ends of it. Orientalism was very popular among the upper classes of Western Europe (particularly those directly involved in European imperialism), who became obsessed with what they saw as the wild, exotic, primitive, and savage lands of the orient. Wealthy Europeans would travel there and marvel at the architecture, gawk at the strange people and their strange customs, and treat the myriad of diverse cultures and ethnic groups living there as a tourist attraction. Orientalism and its obsession with the middle east influenced many levels of society, including political leaders and policymakers. Said describes Orientalism as, "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient", and Western policymakers used orientalist thinking to justify

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[65] William Edward Hartpole Lecky, *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne* Vol. II (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1869), 10.
[66] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 2-3.

the conquests of places such as Egypt that in their minds had once been great but now had declined and needed European intervention.[67]

So how did this influence the historiography of Byzantium? When nineteenth-century Western historians tried to examine the Byzantines, they were confused. They had very specific and very romantic notions of what it means to be "eastern" and what it means to be "Roman" and the Byzantines do not fit easily into any of these preconceived notions. The nineteenth century is also the time when history became an academic discipline and historians became scientific in their study of the past; trying to fit everything into neat categories. The Byzantines did not easily fit into any category. They exist in a liminal space between "Greek" and "Roman", "Eastern" and "Western", "Christian" and "Heretic", and "Ancient" and "Modern". Eastern Rome defied all attempts at categorization and easy understanding and Western historians did not like this. So instead of seriously examining them, they either ignored the Byzantines entirely or treated them with contempt as Lecky and Gibbon did. Because of these things, serious scholarship concerning the Byzantine Empire would be virtually nonexistent in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Byzantium would remain ignored by Western historians until the mid-twentieth century when genuine scholarly interest in the Byzantines exploded. The historiography of the Byzantine Empire went from being barely thought about to big enough that Byzantine Studies became a real subfield in the historical field that people devote their lives to. This is quite the transformation and this transformation is largely due to a small number of scholars in the early to mid-twentieth century who helped lay the foundation for Byzantine Studies as a field. Three of the most important of these early Byzantinists are Charles Diehl, George Ostrogorsky, and Steven Runciman.

Charles Diehl and George Ostrogorsky are two of the pioneers of the wave of interest in Byzantium in the twentieth century. Diehl was one of the first scholars to take a serious look at the Byzantines. Charles Diehl (1859-1944) was a French historian from Strasbourg who spent his life studying Byzantine art and history and taught Byzantine history at the Sorbonne in Paris.[68] He was trained in the classics before shifting focus to Byzantine history. His first major work on Byzantium, which focused on the Exarchate of Ravenna and Byzantine Italy, was published in 1888 and he wrote many volumes on Byzantine art, biographies on people such as Empress

[67] Said, *Orientalism*, 3, 32.
[68] Sara Taylor, "Charles Diehl," Dumbarton Oaks. June 8th, 2015. https://www.doaks.org/resources/bliss-tyler-correspondence/annotations/charles-diehl

Theodora (wife of Justinian the Great), as well as general histories of Byzantium.[69] One of Diehl's emphases was the importance of Eastern Rome in Western history as opposed to the lack of that was placed on it by his predecessors and contemporaries. In his book *Byzantium: Greatness and Decline* (originally published in 1919), he lays out his cards and explains why he felt the need to write his history, "In this book we have tried to show what Byzantium was, what part it played in the history of civilization, and finally what it did for the European world, during the thousand years of its existence".[70] Diehl is going against almost one hundred and fifty years of historical consensus by placing Eastern Rome in a place of high importance rather than one of obscurity. He outlines how Byzantium protected classical knowledge and culture and served as a bulwark for Christian Europe against the barbarian and Islamic east. This would be an enduring theme in future histories of Byzantium.

George Ostrogorsky (1902-1976) was the next historian who brought the Byzantine Empire back into relevance and is one of the founders of Byzantine Studies as a modern discipline. He was born in St. Petersburg but lived much of his life in Belgrade in the former Yugoslavia, which was coincidently part of the Byzantine heartland. By being from Eastern Europe, Ostrogorsky had a cultural connection to the Byzantines who had an incalculable influence on the culture and religion of Eastern Europe. Ostrogorsky was influenced by Charles Diehl and other early Byzantinists, specifically praising Diehl for his work in popularizing Byzantine Studies in his landmark book *History of the Byzantine State* and praised his works saying, "At the same time he was an amazingly versatile scholar who mastered all fields of Byzantine history and art".[71] Ostrogorsky's focus on Byzantine history is what I would call a "top-down approach". His history is structured chronologically and focuses on the emperors ruling at the time. He tells Byzantine history from the perspective of Justinian, Heraclius, Basil II, and so on. His chapter titles include things like "Justinian's Work of Restoration and its Collapse", "The Revival of the Byzantine Empire: Alexius I Comnenus", and "The Restoration of Byzantine power: Michael VIII".[72] Ostrogorsky doesn't neglect the non-Imperial aspects of Byzantine history, but he places historical

[69] Peter Charanis, "Introduction" in *Byzantium: Greatness and Decline* by Charles Diehl, trans. Naomi Walford (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1957) xiii-xiv
[70] Charles Diehl, *Byzantium: Greatness and Decline*, trans. Naomi Walford (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1957), 289.
[71] George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, trans. Joan Hussey (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1969), 7.
[72] Ostrogorsky, *History*, 68, 356, 450.

agency in the hands of the Emperors and the patriarchs. This view of historical agency is not unique to Ostrogorsky, but his foundational role in the field of Byzantine studies made sure that his views on historical agency in Byzantium would influence future Byzantinists.

In the English-speaking world, Steven Runciman (1903-2000) is considered to be *the* founder of Byzantine Studies. Runciman was an English historian whose love of Balkan and Middle Eastern history began with his contact with Eastern European in the 1920s and 1930s and he would go on to write extensively about Byzantine history, the Crusades, and Balkan history.[73] Runciman was born into a wealthy family and he was associated with many prestigious academic institutions including being a graduate and fellow at Trinity College (Cambridge) and taught at the Universities of Istanbul and Oxford. In the preface to his book *1453: Fall of Constantinople*, Runciman outlines his views on how history should be structured:

> In the days when historians were simple folk the Fall of Constantinople, 1453, was held to mark the close of the Middle Ages. Nowadays we know too well that the stream of history flows on relentlessly and there is no barrier across it. There is no point at which we can say that the medieval world changed itself into the modern world.[74]

Runciman pushed back against the popular historical compulsion to categorize and classify history by saying that history is a continuous story that doesn't fit well into neat boxes, which is a statement that could easily be said about Byzantine history itself. Runciman, like many historians of his day, focused on military and political history. Runciman is considered a consummate historian but is known for his significant biases against the Crusaders due to his love of Byzantium. Runciman often blames the Crusaders for causing the downfall of the Eastern Roman Empire:

> The crisis came when a crusading army, lured by the ambition of its leaders, by the jealous greed of their Venetian allies, and by the resentment that every Westerner now felt against the Byzantine Church, turned against Constantinople and captured and sacked it, setting up a Latin Empire on its ruins. This Fourth Crusade of 1204 put an end to the old East Roman Empire as a supranational state.[75]

[73] Giles Constable, "Sir Steven Runciman, 7 July 1903 · 1 November 2000", *American Philisophical Society* 147, no. 1 (2003): 97.
[74] Steven Runciman, *1453: The Fall of Constantinople* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), xi.
[75] Runciman, *1453*, 3.

Whether or not Runciman's well-documented personal dislike of the Crusades are valid or justified are neither here nor there, but it is important to note that they influence his writings.

Charles Diehl, George Ostrogorsky, and Steven Runciman laid the foundation for modern Byzantine Studies and future historians would take their works and build upon them. Byzantium had been rediscovered and the late twentieth century through to the present day has seen new generations of historians explore the Byzantines through both well-worn avenues as well as new ones. Donald M. Nicol (Cambridge graduate and professor of classics and Byzantine history at institutions such as the University of Edinburgh and King's College London) continued the earlier historical methods of examining Byzantine history in chronological order through the lens of the emperors and elites, saying in his preface:

> This book, as first published in 1972, aimed to provide simply a historical framework of the period from 1261 to 1453, written in narrative form, taking the reigns of Emperors in chronological sequence. This was the kind of historiography favored by the Byzantine historians of the last centuries of their society; and it is to them that I owe my greatest debt.[76]

Warren Treadgold, an English historian with a Ph.D. from Harvard, is another influential Byzantinist whose book *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* is almost a thousand pages long and starts its exploration of the Byzantines by discussing Alexander the Great's influence on the region that would one day make up the empire and ends with the fall of the last Byzantine outposts in 1461 .[77] Treadgold's book takes a much broader view of Byzantine history, focusing less on the emperor/patriarch-centric histories of his predecessors and more on larger forces such as economics as well as how the society of Byzantium contrasts with modern views of nationalism and political and religious ideologies.[78] The influence of the Annales School of historiography, which can be described as a more holistic historical method focusing on long-term history, can be seen with Treadgold's great depth and range of examination.

As the twenty-first century dawned, many more historians began to move away from the lists of emperors and shifted their focus to other areas of exploration, chief among them is Judith Herrin. Herrin departs even further from previous historians by not only including methodology

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[76] Donald M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium: 1261-1453* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), xii-xiii.
[77] Warren Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 3-4.
[78] Treadgold, *Byzantine State and Society*, xvi-xvii.

from the Annales School but dives into cultural history. This is exemplified in her most widely read work, *Byzantium: The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire*. In her introduction, Herrin talks about the French historian Fernand Braudel's idea of the *longue durée* which is one of the hallmarks of the Annales School.[79] Herrin also focuses on aspects of Byzantine history such as art, architecture, material culture, and cultural relationships between Byzantium and its neighbors, placing her work in the New Cultural school as well. The field of Byzantine Studies continues to grow to this day, but it remains a niche area of study within the historical field. Despite this, the vibrant world of the Byzantine Empire is finally being rediscovered and appreciated.

Now that the history of Byzantine history has been outlined, it is time to examine some of the debates that currently exist in the field of Byzantine Studies. There are many of these debates and entire libraries could be filled on each of them. However, for this research project, I will examine two of what I see to be the most significant debates surrounding Byzantine history and provide my assessment. The first debate I will examine is this: are the Byzantines Greek or Roman?

There are two camps in this debate. One side believes that the Byzantine Empire was a distinct entity that drew more from Greek culture than Roman, and so should be considered Greek. Charles Diehl wrote that, while the Byzantines called themselves the Roman Empire, they were, "an essentially Eastern realm, and should not be judged by the standards of mighty Rome".[80] Edward Gibbon's thoughts on this matter were made quite clear when he exclaimed that the Byzantines dishonored both Greeks and Romans.[81] This side of the debate emphasizes the Greek influences of Byzantium and de-emphasizes the Roman influences.

There are some historians, though less numerous, who will point out that the people of Byzantium considered themselves Roman and the Emperors of Constantinople called themselves "Roman Emperors." Steven Runciman speaks of the Byzantine Empire as being in continuity with the old Roman Empire when talking about its loss of territory over the centuries, "Manuel was indeed the lawful heir of Augustus and Constantine; but many centuries had passed since the Emperors residing at Constantinople could command the allegiance of the Roman World."[82]

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[79] Judith Herrin, *Byzantium: The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007) xv.
[80] Diehl, *Byzantium*, 3.
[81] Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, 161.
[82] Runciman, *1453*, 1.

Donald Nicol writes about the Roman identity of the inhabitants of Byzantium in the first pages of his book:

> Byzantine is a convenient term to describe the culture of the medieval world that centered on Constantinople. It was not a word that the inhabitants of that world were in the habit of employing. They saw themselves as Romans or *Romaioi*, and their as that eastern portion of the Greco-Roman world of antiquity which had, by God's grace, survived all the catastrophes and changes that afflicted the western part of the old Roman Empire.[83]

As for myself, I fall into the belief that the Byzantine (or Eastern Roman) Empire was the legal continuation of the Roman Empire founded by Caesar Augustus. I would point to two things to support this: the continuity of the empire's leaders and the self-professed Roman identity of the people living in the empire. The overwhelming majority of the people of the Byzantine Empire never thought of themselves as anything but Roman and, if they thought of themselves as Romans (even after 1453), then we should as well. I would also point to the same continuity of leadership that Runciman identified to support my position. From the ascension of Augustus in 27 BC to the death of Constantine XI in 1453, there was no interregnum or break in the line of emperors save for the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade in which the Latin Empire controlled Constantinople and several Byzantine rump states vied for the throne. This fact coupled with the Roman identity of its people and the fact that Roman law never ceased to be the law of the land tells me that the Byzantines were not heirs of Rome, but that they were Rome. I believe that instead of considering Byzantium to be a separate entity, we should look at Byzantium as a historical epoch within the larger story of Roman Civilization. Roman history should be divided into the semi-mythical Kingdom Period, the Republican Era, the Imperial Period, and the Byzantine Period.

Calling this next point a debate may be a misnomer, as most historians agree on this point. I bring it up because I have a differing perspective and I believe that it is a perspective that should be considered more by more professional historians than myself. What I am referring to is the question of when the Byzantine Empire begins. The majority of historians will say it began when Constantine the Great moved the capital of the Roman Empire to Constantinople in 330 AD. Charles Diehl says it plainly in the first chapter of his book, "On May 11, 330, the day Constantine founded Constantinople and made it the second capital of the Roman Empire, the Byzantine

[83] Nicol, *Last Centuries*, 1.

Empire was born".[84] Nearly every book about the Byzantines begins with Constantine and the founding of his city. It makes sense. After all, Constantinople would prove to be the center and beating heart of the empire in the coming centuries so it would make sense to date the beginning of that empire to the founding of the city.

I believe that this explanation works if one is operating on the assumption that the Byzantine Empire is not the continuation of the Roman Empire. But considering that I do believe that, an alternative date would be more appropriate. If I had to date the beginning of the Byzantine Period, I would place it at the end of the reign of Emperor Heraclius in 641. It was during the reign of Heraclius that what most people consider to be "Byzantine" came to be. By the time of his death, the empire had lost all of its territory in the Levant and Africa (including the ever profitable Egypt), assuming the familiar Byzantine borders that encompassed Anatolia and the Balkans.[85] By 641, Greek had replaced Latin as the official language of state and Christianity had become an inseparable part of Roman life. I believe that 641 represents the final shift away from the Rome of antiquity and towards the Rome of the middle ages that we call Byzantium.

I just wrote my personal, though informed, opinions on two very nuanced and vast topics in two pages whereas Byzantinists have spent their lives trying to come to sufficient answers. Despite my lack of depth in representing these debates, I hope it illustrates the fact that the field of Byzantine Studies is vibrant and full of good scholarly debate. The field has come a long way. What started as the woeful reminiscences of the survivors of May 29, 1453 were discarded as irrelevant by Western historians and Orientalists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries who didn't understand the Byzantines has become a dynamic historical field. Working off of the foundation laid in the early twentieth century, modern Byzantinists are making new discoveries and publishing exciting new research all the time. The Eastern Roman Empire, once lost to obscurity and historical ambivalence, has been rediscovered to the benefit of the ages.

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[84] Diehl, *Byzantium*, 5.
[85] Herrin, *Byzantium*, 86.

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De-Stalinization versus Stalinization:
The political clash between various Soviet leaders
shown through Foreign and Domestic Policy

Herbert Grimm

In January of 1924, Vladimir Lenin, leader of the October Revolution and founder of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, died at the age of 53 after suffering from severe sclerosis. In Moscow, the Red Square was crowded with thousands of Russian citizens in the freezing temperatures, where they heard speeches from Joseph Stalin and other Soviet political leaders. Communist organizations from across Europe and Asia sent messages and telegrams to the Council of People's Commissars (CPC) with their condolences.[86] Lenin's testament was never made public to the USSR civilians, where his demands for the political struggles between Stalin and Trotsky be resolved and prevent a split in the Soviet governing body. Lenin feared that if this political struggle did not come to an end, it would divide the USSR politically and ideologically.[87] Stalin was able to keep his position as General Secretary, and the political struggle between Stalin and Trotsky continued until Trotsky was expelled from the Communist Party in 1927. This would in turn give Joseph Stalin political supremacy over the smaller factions of the Communist Party.

Lenin's death was the cause of the split of the Communist Party between Stalin with his Cult of Personality and Trotsky with his United Opposition. The United Opposition was the combination of the Right Opposition and Left Opposition, with both factions favoring domestic affairs and ultimately being against Stalin. Stalin was able to take his position with little difficulty as General Secretary, whereas Trotsky was not able to oppose him publicly. Stalin created a divide between himself and his previous party, the Right Opposition, while keeping his eye on Trotsky. Stalin's methods of Power Politics were able to keep his position, prevent a strong opposition from forming, and keep the people in check. This would be the foundation of Stalinization and his Cult of Personality. Stalinization would eventually branch out from domestic politics into international affairs and incorporate other communist parties. De-Stalinization, which would be formed later, would be built to oppose Stalin following his death.

[86] Bramley, Fred, Trades Union Congress. General Council, and Soviet Union. Sovet narodnykh komissarov. *Telegram Expressing Regret on the Death of Lenin (Copy)*. Documents, n.d.
[87] Lih, Lars T. "Political Testament of Lenin and Bukharin and the Meaning of NEP." *Slavic Review* 50, no. 2 (1991): 241–52.

The various factors that will divide Stalinization from De-Stalinization are their connections to foreign affairs, domestic affairs, and geopolitics. Stalinization derives from Joseph Stalin's power politics, where he was able to keep his position and prevent resistance from forming. Stalinization would go on to focus on power politics on the international stage, which would be very successful, and in time would lead or incorporate troubling issues and problems on the domestic stage. Stalinization could be seen through international security, use of power politics against the west, and spreading Marxist influence. These actions would have negative effects on economic stability, Soviet political power, and the general population. De-Stalinization, created by Nikita Khrushchev following the death of Stalin, would be used to counter Stalinization. De-Stalinization would limit the use of power politics, greatly supporting the domestic stage, and in time lead to conflicts and issues on the international stage. These actions could be seen through limiting the use of power politics, focus on domestic issues, and keeping Marxist influence to a minimum. These actions would result in geopolitical instability, spread of western influence, and division of political nations. These factors would go on to define the major soviet political leaders up until the fall of the USSR. The major leaders that will be used are Joseph Stalin, Nikita Khrushchev, Leonid Brezhnev, and Mikhail Gorbachev. There are notable exceptions when it comes to Soviet leadership, such as Vladimir Lenin since he was not involved in Stalinization when it was created. Other leaders such as Georgy Malenkov, Yuri Andropov, and Konstantin Chernenko would not be included since their leadership would end quickly either by political struggle or death in office. These major leaders would be the focus of Stalinization and De-Stalinization throughout the history of the USSR up until the fall of 1991.

Most historical works would become difficult during this time because of the political overview of sources by the USSR and the restrictions to their archives up until the fall of the USSR. The first problem with primary documentation was its regulation by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and the debate of credibility throughout this time. With this regulation in place, most works heavily emphasized Marxist theory, with some instances of historical revisionism. Along with this regulation of the sources was the regulation of its translations and interpretations, where Western scholars would be given transcripts with censored segments and "corrective" footnotes by CPSU officials.[88] With several regulations in place on the historiography

[88] Lewis, B. E. Review of *Soviet Taboo*, by B. Liddel Gart and B. Liddell Hart. *Soviet Studies* 29, no. 4 (1977): 603–606.

of soviet history, international scholars would have a difficult time attempting to understand what might be censored, what was "corrected," and what they could see within the limits of the CPSU.[89] There were several attempts to uncover the true historiography of Soviet history, beginning in the Brezhnev Era. During this time, several historians and political figures would use several methods of sharing documentation internationally. *Samizdat*, the circulation of unofficial transcripts, and *Tamizdat*, the illegal publication of works abroad, would be the main phases of historiography with several notable dissidents such as Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, Andrei Sakharov, and Roy Medvedev.[90] Other efforts to show the historiography and events within the USSR would not fully open until the implementation of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*, the propaganda programs under Mikhail Gorbachev. Following Gorbachev, the historiographical understanding of the USSR for the west expanded greatly, especially with the release of official documents and private libraries from several soviet leaders.

This article will focus on Stalinization and De-Stalinization through the various major soviet leaders and their connections to foreign and domestic affairs, geopolitics, and international relations. Joseph Stalin and his power politics would be the beginnings of Stalinization and its influence on the international stage. Stalin would ultimately use his power politics at will against the West, tying together the communist nations. The focus of the Eastern bloc would be key in implementing this power, resulting in civil unrest and heavy reliance on industrialization. Nikita Khrushchev would be the General Secretary following Stalin's death and his efforts would primarily support De-Stalinization. Khrushchev's De-Stalinization methods would focus on domestic and civil issues resulting from Stalin, leading to international influence and resistance, and the consolidation of the USSR's national security rather than the Eastern Bloc. Leonid Brezhnev would remove Khrushchev from office, allowing Brezhnev to begin implementing factors of Stalinization and reversing De-Stalinization. Brezhnev would be very effective with power politics against the west and geopolitical stability in the east, resulting in economic falls and employment shortages. Once Brezhnev died, the position was switched between several leaders until Mikhail Gorbachev implemented De-Stalinization, which lasted until the fall of the USSR. Gorbachev focused on economic reforms and political expression, resulting in the ultimate

[89] Ellman, Michael. "Another Forged 'Stalin Document.'" *Europe-Asia Studies* 59, no. 5 (2007): 869–872.
[90] Dean, Richard N. "Contacts with the West: The Dissidents' View of Western Support for the Human Rights Movement in the Soviet Union." *Universal Human Rights* 2, no. 1 (1980): 47–65.

split of the communist nations and the dissolution of the USSR in the early 1990s. Through these Soviet leaders, we can see the factors that play through both Stalinization and De-Stalinization, the effects of both political theories, and their influence on future leadership.

Stalin's Regime

Joseph Stalin began his ascension through the Bolshevik faction of the Russian Communist Party in 1901 when he was elected as a delegate of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party.[91] He worked with the Labour Party throughout this time by inciting strikes at several factories, editing a Georgian Marxist newspaper, and taking part in Georgian politics. Following the Russian Civil War of 1905, His actions began to shift towards more violence by focusing on funding through robberies, holding the ransom of several children of political opponents, and began counterfeiting money for the Communist Party.[92] These actions would eventually raise him through the ranks of the Central Committee after being exiled numerous times by the Tsarist government.

Joseph Stalin rose to power under Vladimir Lenin within the Central Committee of the Labour Party in Russia. His actions would be influential for the Marxist cause, beneficial through monetary means, and controversial since the beginning of his political career. Through the many splits and decisions with Marxist thought, Stalin leaned towards the Bolshevik Faction under Vladimir Lenin. During this time, the two major Marxist factions were the Mensheviks, known as the "Majority", and the Bolsheviks, known as the "Minority". These factions would clash during the early 20th century up until the Red Revolution of 1917, where the Bolshevik Faction gained the majority. Following the Red Revolution, Vladimir Lenin used his faction to regain control of the Marxist majority through various means, while the Mensheviks began their Coalition government.[93] It was not until 1919 that Russia became a one-party state with the official formation of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR). During this time, Joseph Stalin grew politically within the Central Committee of the Communist Party, which began to split the Communist Party from within. Most of the opposing members of Stalin, such as Leon Trotsky, split into the Left Opposition and Stalin was within the Right Opposition until his rise to leadership. In 1922, after a strenuous civil war with the remaining Tsarists forces and the temporary political

[91] Rieber, Alfred J. "Stalin as Georgian: The Formative Years". In Sarah Davies; James Harris (eds.). *Stalin: A New History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. pp. 18–44.
[92] Montefiore, Simon Sebag. *Young Stalin.* London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007.
[93] Leggett, George. *The Cheka: Lenin's Political Police*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981.

divides settled, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was formed under Lenin. Lenin died two years following the formation of the USSR, in January of 1924, leaving the Marxist factions to settle the shift in leadership. Stalin kept his position of General Secretary of the Communist Party, which shifted with more importance, and was recognized nationally.

Once in this position of authority, he began to radically change the economic landscape and reformed international policy. His focus economically was the radical shift towards mass industrialization and the major shift away from agriculture. Stalin began his efforts in Collectivization domestically while waging war against the "Kulaks", or rich farmers in southern Russia. His efforts began small within the peasant holdings up to the larger efforts of the USSR, primarily by force.[94] He stated that the fault of the distribution of resources by the capitalist is the implementation of various "middlemen" in the process that bogged down the speed of distribution. His efforts focused on the development of larger distribution centers that sent resources directly to the peasant holdings rather than establishing smaller distribution centers for easier access. His focus on international reformation was his use of power politics throughout Europe and strengthening the republics. His first action was his refusal to join the League of Nations and his lack of international influence on Europe as a whole.[95] Stalin stated that his lack of action in European politics was because of his criticism of "imperialist" politics with the formation of a world alliance and would hinder his efforts against Poland and Japan. These actions were just a few examples of Stalin's power politics in play domestically and within foreign affairs, some of which would have dire consequences within his leadership up to the fall of the USSR.

Stalinism as a political process is primarily based on several aspects that have grown since Stalin's election in the Central Committee up to his death in 1953. Examples of this progression include his use of Terror, the shift in ideology, the influence of society, and the formation of a personality cult. His use of Terror was primarily about the Great Purges in the late 1930s but came to be about his early methods within the Bolshevik Faction. Hiroaki Kuromiya, a historian that primarily focused on power politics under Stalin, described that the use of Terror was used to suppress opposition domestically and abroad.[96] His methods were brutal and expanded through

[94] Stalin, Joseph, 1879-1953, and Communist Party of Great Britain. *The Worker's State : Foreign Delegation's Interview with J. Stalin, on November 5th, 1927*. Documents. London : Communist Party of Great Britain, n.d. pp. 14.
[95] Stalin, Joseph, *The Worker's State : Foreign Delegation's Interview with J. Stalin, on November 5th, 1927*. pp. 3.
[96] Kuromiya, Hiroaki. "Stalin and His Era." *The Historical Journal* 50, no. 3 (2007): 711-713.

the Communist Party, the military, and even the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD). These purges would have a major impact on Domestic policy and the military during the Second World War.

Stalin's ideology has become a major factor in Stalinization, which itself is not entirely clear. Numerous debates and information have shifted his place in Marxism and whether Stalin disregarded Marxist ideology entirely. Politically, Stalin had several methods of acquiring support: whether through force with the Great Purges or completely tempered during negotiations throughout foreign affairs.[97] Stalin knew how to use these methods effectively, which allowed him to garner major support and destroy any opposition. With his effective leadership, he was able to shift his ideological narrative to fit the situation at hand, which has led many historians and political scientists to declare him to be a "creative" Marxist, denoting a form of Marxism not entirely bounded by Marxist works. This reason being is with his nationality, where he was an ethnic Georgian ruling over the Russian nation, where he describes his leadership vividly through speech, documents, and thought.

Stalin's thoughts and actions within society were vastly different from his politics and ideology. With Stalin and much of his staff, various official documentation and literature would ultimately harbor the political strife of Stalinism, while journals and letters gave a vastly different view.[98] Official documentation distributed throughout the USSR was taken at face value: The mass arrests of political dissidents, targeting of Kulaks, the Great Purges, and other efforts detailed. The private documentation, which was not accessible until much later, painted a different picture of Stalin, where the political attitude towards Stalin was not accurately measured by the population. His "Cult of Personality" would be a defining factor in his views on Russian society. This cult would radically change Stalin's view on politics, ideology, and society during his reign.

"The Cult of Personality" describes Stalin's shift in political actions, philosophy, and views on society. With the support of the remaining members of the Communist Party, this change would ultimately take root within the USSR and would have massive influence abroad in China. His shift in politics would result in an emphasis on nationalism and the spread of Marxist ideology through Stalin's means, meaning that his interpretations of Marxism would be final.[99] His views on society

[97] Kuromiya, Hiroaki. "Stalin and His Era." *The Historical Journal* 50, no. 3 (2007): 717-722.
[98] Kuromiya, Hiroaki. "Stalin and His Era." *The Historical Journal* 50, no. 3 (2007): 722-724.
[99] Tucker, Robert C. "The Rise of Stalin's Personality Cult." *The American Historical Review* 84, no. 2 (1979): 347–366.

would be relatively confirmed since the Great Purges ultimately eliminated any public opposition to this cult. These practices and shifts can be seen through his foreign policy and domestic disputes.

One prominent factor of Stalinization is the emphasis on geopolitics and the configuration of borders. Stalin used this method to strengthen his method of power politics by shifting the borders of nations to benefit the USSR. This can be seen following the Second World War where the Soviet Red Army pushed back the Wehrmacht of the Third Reich, wherewith each nation liberated was a nation that could ultimately benefit Stalin. Stalin used these nations that he liberated to grow economically, expand Marxist thought, and play a role in keeping the Western nations in check.[100] These borders, especially with East Germany, would keep the West from resorting to direct military intervention in Soviet expansion. Along with the use of power politics, borders help establish a stronger sense of national security, where most deployments of the military were near borders. Stalin's purpose of borders was to keep the Western powers at bay, while also providing much needed capital for research and development.

Stalin's use of power politics expanded greatly during the Second World War, where support from the east European nations grew as it pushed back the German Reich and reclaimed occupied nations. Stalin would have this element of support, as well as the support of the military, to expand this influence throughout Eastern Europe. His sense of power politics shifted away from Nazi Germany towards the United States and the Western world. His efforts can be seen with the formation of East Germany, where Stalin was able to address economic conditions throughout Germany and the establishment of the Eastern Bloc states.[101] In this document, Stalin details his plans on establishing support for the East German economy, the focus on national security, and the USSR's possible influence on the world economy against the United States. There is also a discussion of political suggestions for the newly occupied territories following the elections of communist regimes. These factors would be the most beneficial factors of foreign policy, which would be overshadowed by domestic disputes throughout Russia.

One of these domestic disputes would involve one of Stalin's early policies: the rapid shift toward industrialization and the reduced support for agriculture. For this to be implemented

[100] Wolff, David. "Stalin's Postwar Border-Making Tactics: East and West." *Cahiers Du Monde Russe* 52, no. 2/3 (2011): 273–291.
[101] "Stalin's Conference with East European Delegates," January 09, 1951, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, C. Cristescu, "Ianuarie 1951: Stalin decide inannarea Romanei," Magazin Istoric, 1995, no. 10, pp. 15-23

effectively, Stalin needed to wage war against the Kulaks, or rich farmers, and attempt to collectivize the lands. Kulaks would be farmers gathering wealth not by monetary means but through trade and would ultimately expand in landmass to help with trade.[102] Stalin would have to use precious resources to gain control of these lands and regain control over trade within the USSR. Under Stalin, these domestic efforts that were established before his rule would distract or stray the people away from mass collectivization. This would hinder Stalin's collectivization efforts in the beginning and the ill effects of this effort would either be immediately felt during Stalin's reign or be felt much later.

One of these immediate effects would be the large famines that would emerge from the war against the Kulaks. Vast famines would be a common occurrence during the 1930s and would further expand through Stalin's efforts in collectivization.[103] The main causes of this famine could be directly tied to the mass industrialization efforts with very limited productions, the forced collectivization of resources, the elimination of the Kulak class, and the exportation of grain. Fewer farmers were working in agriculture, most laborers were focused on industry, leading to less grain being managed. Forced collectivization would keep the flow of resources on a tight range, leading to many peasants without access to these resources. Even with the mass famines within the USSR, the republics continually exported much of their grain to help the nations economically. These effects were felt in the fall of the USSR, with the economic crisis in the 1980s, and political split following Stalin's death.

Along with the famines, Stalin implemented the Great Purges to keep the people in check, eliminate political rivals, and establish dominance within the single-party state. Most targets at the beginning of the 1930s included political rivals within the Communist Party, ex-Kulaks following the conflict, and previous officers of the Tsarist Regime.[104] The targets further expanded to include the Red Army and the NKVD itself, the political force that carried out these arrests and executions. The establishment of labor camps would further the expanse of these methods and the number of people affected. These brutal tactics would be further implemented within the Soviet Red Army during the Second World War. An example would be following the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the

[102] Lewin, M. "Who Was the Soviet Kulak?" *Soviet Studies* 18, no. 2 (1966): 189–212.
[103] Livi-Bacci, Massimo. "On the Human Costs of Collectivization in the Soviet Union." *Population and Development Review* 19, no. 4 (1993): 743–766.
[104] Shearer, David R., and Vladimir Khaustov. "The Great Purges: 1935–1939." In *Stalin and the Lubianka: A Documentary History of the Political Police and Security Organs in the Soviet Union, 1922–1953*, 170–92. Yale University Press, 2015.

non-aggression pact between Nazi Germany & the USSR, and their efforts in Poland. During this time, Nazi Germany invaded West Poland while the USSR took the eastern portion. Once this land was acquired, the NKVD conducted several mass executions of thousands of Polish officers, named the Katyn Massacre.[105] Many other Polish soldiers would be placed within labor camps already established during the Great Purges. These would ultimately stain Polish-Soviet relations, resulting in various revolutions within several leaderships.

Joseph Stalin, in his emphasis on foreign affairs over domestic affairs, began to expand on these methods of power politics throughout his entire political career. With the beginnings of Marxist thought, Stalin began to write his criticisms of Marx and later implement them. Through the chain of the Communist Party, he would establish his support through undesirable means of violence and political theory. His efforts in foreign policy would ultimately establish the USSR as a reigning power that would stand against the US with its forces in Eastern Europe. Stalin's domestic efforts resulted in famines, purges, and labor camps through the means of rapid industrialization and political suppression of opponents. These efforts would be recognized, supported, or demoralizing for the various leaders that would succeed him. For Khrushchev, Stalin leaves the USSR in a position of power internationally with a demoralized domestic population and economic shortfall.

Khrushchev's Thaw

Georgy Malenkov, previously the Second Secretary of the Communist Party under Stalin, rose to the position of General Secretary following the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953. Malenkov's position was contested since his rise to power by various politburo members, especially Nikita Khrushchev. It wasn't until early 1954 did Khrushchev succeed in obtaining those positions and replacing Malenkov.[106] Malenkov was still a member of the Communist Party and the Politburo until he staged a coup against Khrushchev that ultimately failed, leading to his exile in 1961. Khrushchev's political struggle for power did not end with Malenkov.

Khrushchev's position as General Secretary of the Communist Party was for the most part obtained by the removal of Malenkov. Khrushchev's actions were mostly criticized through his practice of foreign and domestic policy, where the party was either against him or did not garner

[105] Kużniar-Plota , Małgorzata. "Decision to Commence Investigation into Katyn Massacre." Institute of National Remembrance, January 12, 2004.
[106] Brown, Archie. *The Rise and Fall of Communism,* 232-233. HarperCollins Publishers, 1996.

much attention from the Politburo.[107] One opponent was Vyacheslav Molotov, the former foreign minister of the USSR, where the two constantly debated on the practice of foreign and domestic policy. One example is Khrushchev's attempt at negotiating a peace treaty with Austria, where if it was signed the Soviets would be able to remove Soviet troops already garrisoned there. Molotov was reluctant with Khrushchev's methods, but the peace summit was already arranged, which led to politburo members attacking Molotov for turning the world against the USSR.[108] Molotov was still able to maintain his political power and continued to push against Khrushchev, while Khrushchev himself focused more on domestic policy.

Khrushchev's policies were directly affected by the USSR's strong influence internationally and needed to focus on domestic morale and economic shortfall. The foundational work that describes his entire process when it comes to domestic policy was the "Secret Speech" given to a closed Politburo panel in 1956. In this speech, Khrushchev created the term "De-Stalinization", the reversal of major Stalinist policy domestically and in foreign affairs. He repeatedly dismissed the works of Stalin, denounced his party motives, and targeted the cult of personality created by Stalin. "In practice Stalin ignored the norms of party life and trampled on the Leninist principle of collective party leadership."[109] With the reversal of Stalinist politics, came the reformation of Leninism and collective leadership. The Politburo expanded its influence outside of the party walls and expanded throughout the international scene.

Khrushchev's practice of these De-Stalinization efforts gave him favorable support domestically while the foreign aspects of politics had the opposite effect. Khrushchev's foreign policies have had negative impacts on foreign affairs. The several splits between previous communist nations, suppression of rebellions and protests in the Eastern Bloc, restrictions on power politics themselves, and the rising tension between the United State and the USSR. His domestic policies and actions garnered much more support with the expansion of expression through speech and press, the release of political prisoners, and the existence of neutral states.

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[107] Smith, Kathleen E. "Khrushchev's Thaw: Selective De-Stalinization." In *Remembering Stalin's Victims: Popular Memory and the End of the USSR*, 20–40. Cornell University Press, 1996.

[108] Fursenko, Aleksandr, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, 27 W.W. Norton & Co., 2006.

[109] "Khrushchev's Secret Speech, 'On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences,' Delivered at the Twentieth Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union," February 25, 1956, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, From the Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of the 84th Congress, 2nd Session (May 22, 1956-June 11, 1956), C11, Part 7 (June 4, 1956), pp. 9389-9403.

These are the main aspects that go into Khrushchev's political practice and history, where he succeeded on the domestic scale, but on the foreign scale led to undesirable consequences.

One example of his foreign policies and the actions resulting thereof was the Sino-Soviet Split where the two major Communist nations in the world divided themselves ideologically, leading to severe political tension. These tensions erupted following the installment of De-Stalinization efforts in the USSR and the Albanian-Soviet Split earlier. The Albanian-Soviet Split occurred because Khrushchev had criticisms on keeping a Stalinist government, while China was in support of keeping Stalinism. Mao Zedong, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of China, also expressed concern over Khrushchev's timid behavior while against the US. Mao attempted to reconnect with the Soviet Union but was turned away by Khrushchev's lack of action with the US efforts.[110] This split between the two major communist nations would ultimately turn the Cold War into a three-front conflict.

Another example of his foreign efforts was the bloody suppression in Poland and Hungary, where both nations protested the Soviet party. The uprisings resulted in the shift of political leadership and eventually involved the military. An intelligence report to the ministry of national defense details the main sources of struggle, political conflict, and possible actions to resolve these issues. For Poland, one main issue was the removal of Soviet troops throughout the nation while the student protest in Hungary erupted in violence with the involvement of artillery and tanks in Budapest.[111] These protests were brutally suppressed by the Soviet military and had repercussions throughout the world itself. The actions taken that day ultimately led to other uprisings and protests in the future.

The tension between the US and the USSR has fluctuated over time and with different leaders. Khrushchev was no different and was involved in several instances where communication broke down between the nations. Following the Bay of Pigs invasion as well as the quarantine of Cuba, Khrushchev has had several choice words when it came to President Kennedy:

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[110] "Cable from the CCPCC International Liaison Department and the Foreign Ministry, 'Key Points of the Conversation from Chairman of the CCP CC Comrade Mao Zedong's Reception of the Soviet Ambassador to China Comrade Chernovenko'," March 13, 1963, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA 109-03861-03, 13-17. Translated by David Cowhig.

[111] "Bulgarian Military Intelligence Information on the Situation in Hungary and Poland," November 01, 1956, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Central State Archive, Sofia, Fond 378-B, File 1032; Translated by Vanja Petkova, Edited by Dr. Jordan Baev, Momchil Metodiev, and Nancy L. Meyers. Obtained by the Bulgarian Cold War Research Group.

> You, Mr. President, are not declaring a quarantine, but rather issuing an ultimatum, and you are threatening that if we do not obey your orders, you will then use force. Think about what you are saying! And you want to persuade me to agree to this! What does it mean to agree to these demands? It would mean for us to conduct our relations with other countries not by reason, but by yielding to tyranny. You are not appealing to reason; you want to intimidate us.[112]

The breakdown of communication following this letter would ultimately lead to the Cuban missile crisis. Khrushchev himself was not in favor of discussing US-Soviet relations, but still enforced the entente principle, where the nations do not plan on using nuclear weapons or come into direct conflict between the nations.

Domestically, Khrushchev was more successful in implementing and enforcing domestic policies. His limited expansion of expression through speech and press has given the people more political freedom within the politburo and the public. During his time as First Secretary, He allowed for a limited amount of works to be published that were not entirely state-approved. The books caused quite a bit of controversy for the CPSU, but most were still allowed to be published in the USSR. An example was the book *Not by Bread Alone* which was well-received during the Khrushchev era but was highly criticized by CPSU officials.[113] Other works were either banned throughout the USSR or were published but heavily monitored and reviewed by party leaders. This step was small compared to other leaders but was a major turning point for De-Stalinization.

Another major domestic policy was the lack of intervention in other nations and other communist parties, where neutral states would be supported externally by the USSR. One example was the Romanian Communist Party presenting itself as neutral in the Sino-Soviet Split, where the nation did not adhere to either the USSR or People's Republic of China (PRC). The USSR granted its independence since it had a lot of major influence on the international scale, did not border the Iron Curtain, surrounded by Socialist states, and did not abandon the Communist system.[114] Romania was not going to be a direct threat when it came to the international scale, where it wouldn't be inherently hostile towards the USSR and would not join with the PRC or the US.

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[112] "Letter from Khrushchev to John F. Kennedy," October 24, 1962, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Library of Congress

[113] Taubman, William., *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era*, W.W. Norton & Co., 2003. p. 270

[114] Liu, Yong. 2006. *Sino-Romanian relations: 1950's-1960's*. București: Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului. p. 199

Other factors that have played a role in Khrushchev's domestic policies are the renaming of cities and buildings, removal of statues of Stalin, and the release of political prisoners arrested by Stalin. The beginning efforts of these policies followed immediately after the "Secret Speech was released to the public. The names of buildings that were referring to Stalin were renamed as well as streets, parks, and even the renaming of Stalingrad to Volgograd. The release of political prisoners paved the way for criticism of the CPSU but to a minor degree. The prisoners began to write and publish works detailing their time in the labor camps, where the CPSU would monitor and edit these publications slightly more in favor of the party.[115] Along with the release of the prisoners and editing of publications, party leaders expected that the people would be joyful and become more loyal to the party. Khrushchev's efforts on the domestic scale would be praised for his efforts for the citizens and economic development of the USSR, resulting in a scrambling Eastern Bloc and international tensions.

Brezhnev's Era of Stagnation

Khrushchev was ultimately removed from office by the Politburo for various reasons, including the fact that his sense of decision-making was not on par with the party's and because of the lack of communication and cooperation with other party leaders. Khrushchev left the domestic realm peaceful and contained, resulting in political splits among the communist nations which would ultimately shift the Cold War into a three-front cold war between the USSR, US, and the People's Republic of China (PRC). Headed by Leonid Brezhnev, the Politburo was able to remove Khrushchev from his positions through the political process without any bloodshed or involvement of the military. Most of Khrushchev's efforts were not ultimately reversed, resulting in a complete severing of ties between the USSR and PRC on all matters.[116] These results would put Leonid Brezhnev in a difficult position, where he obtained Khrushchev's positions and needed to reverse several of Khrushchev's policies to prevent an all-out war with the PRC.

Several political disputes and obstacles arose following Brezhnev's rise to power such as the formation of a troika, a three-prong executive power, to prevent the same issues from Khrushchev's reign during Brezhnev's regime. The Politburo of the time prevented the rise of another Khrushchev authority by preventing a person from obtaining both positions of General

[115] Taubman, William., *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era*, W.W. Norton & Co., 2003. p. 276
[116] Lüthi, Lorenz M. "Khrushchev's Fall and the Collapse of Party Relations, 1963–1966." In *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World*, 273–301. Princeton University Press, 2008.

Secretary and Premier. Over time, Brezhnev was able to dissolve several of these political positions by either dissolving the represented organization, stripping away of responsibilities and debates on the importance of those positions. This allowed for more trust within the Politburo, where his political motives were practiced under the eyes of the Politburo without much resistance.[117] This newly formed trust would help with the reversal of Khrushchev's previous policies, consolidate power within the Politburo, and restore the image of the General Secretary as the sole power figure of the USSR.

Brezhnev began reforming the aspects of Stalinization through various means of his public image: through politics, literature, and pride. His sense of politics ultimately relied on the Politburo, like Stalin's Politburo following the Great Purges enforced to reform the political party. Brezhnev adhered to the Politburo's supervision and suggestions when it came to foreign and domestic policy.[118] His sense of politics bled into his public figure and pride as the years of his regime began to turn against him domestically. Throughout his time as secretary and in the military, he began collecting medals, where he was awarded over one hundred separate medals for military service, literature, and other various recognitions.[119] Most of these recognitions made Brezhnev a target for politics and many criticized his actions and deeds that resulted in those medals. The creation of this personality cult during this era is very similar to Stalin's cult and political motives: the favorable actions on the international stage resulted in domestic disputes and turmoil.

One of his most notable achievements in the foreign stage was the emphasis on the Brezhnev Doctrine, an expansion of the Warsaw Pact that united all the Eastern Bloc states into one international power.[120] It stated that the USSR and its allies have a right to interfere with international disputes if the problem puts the communist nations at risk. "When forces that are hostile to socialism try to turn the development of some socialist country towards capitalism, it becomes not only a problem of the country concerned, but a common problem and concern of all socialist countries."[121] The doctrine itself has already been implemented for some time, but Brezhnev heavily emphasized the intervention of political and social disputes. With this doctrine

[117] Bacon, Edwin; Sandle, Mark, eds. *Brezhnev Reconsidered*. Palgrave Macmillan., 2002. p. 13
[118] Bacon, Edwin; Sandle, Mark, eds. *Brezhnev Reconsidered*. Palgrave Macmillan., 2002. p. 10
[119] Bacon, Edwin; Sandle, Mark, eds. *Brezhnev Reconsidered*. Palgrave Macmillan., 2002. p. 8-10
[120] Suri, Jeremi. "The Promise and Failure of 'Developed Socialism': The Soviet 'Thaw' and the Crucible of the Prague Spring, 1964-1972." *Contemporary European History* 15, no. 2 (2006): 133–158
[121] Herd, Graeme P.; Moroney, Jennifer D. *Security Dynamics in the former Soviet Bloc*. Routledge Publishing, 2003.

at hand, the CPSU was able to maintain control of the Eastern Bloc states from defecting to the west and strengthen political ties with the nations themselves.

Another prominent foreign policy under Brezhnev was the enforcement of the Entente program: the reduced political tension between the US and USSR through various agreements and programs. In the early years of Brezhnev's regime, he knew that the tensions between the US and USSR needed to settle to straighten out the Eastern Bloc and build up relations with the PRC.[122] Brezhnev needed to focus on the eastern states and attempt to save the crumbling economy during the late 1970s. The enforcement of these actions would ultimately bring political tension down as well as bring up tensions between the USSR and PRC.[123] The lack of effort in the support of the Vietnam War along with the Entente efforts in place led to the split in political relations between the USSR and PRC with the benefit of a better political atmosphere.

The domestic disputes that would result from these actions would be detrimental to the citizens and local party leaders and the effects of previous policy would bring in much more turmoil. One example is the political corruption that arises from the Brezhnev Era, where party leaders of the Politburo would either take bribes to receive support in politics, target Brezhnev and his policies or keep their positions of power.[124] These actions would ultimately lead to a string of political corruption between nations that would lead to these political rebellions in the late 1970s, such as Hungary and Czechoslovakia. These nations would eventually be put down through suppression either by NKVD forces or the military.

Another domestic dispute would be the economic stagnation that would be prevalent throughout Brezhnev's reign. The stagnations would be a result of Stalin's rapid industrialization and Brezhnev's shift away from mass industrialization. There was also the issue of the technological gap between the US and the USSR fueling the stagnations.[125] The economy began to rapidly decline in the late 1970s and into the early 1980s, where Brezhnev formed several economic reforms to keep the USSR afloat. He also included a five-year plan for economic stability

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[122] "Speech by L.I. Brezhnev to CPSU CC Politburo, 08 June 1978," June 08, 1978, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Center for Storage of Contemporary Documentation (TsKhSD), Moscow, fond 89, per. 34, dok. 1. Obtained by David Wolff and translated by M. Doctoroff.

[123] Kramer, Mark. "Foreign Policymaking and Party-State Relations in the Soviet Union during the Brezhnev Era." In *Communist Parties Revisited: Sociocultural Approaches to Party Rule in the Soviet Bloc, 1956-1991*, edited by Rüdiger Bergien and Jens Gieseke, 1st ed., 281–312. Berghahn Books, 2018.

[124] Gorlizki, Yoram. "Too Much Trust: Regional Party Leaders and Local Political Networks under Brezhnev." *Slavic Review* 69, no. 3 (2010): 676–700.

[125] Shane, Scott., "What Price Socialism? An Economy Without Information". *Dismantling Utopia: How Information Ended the Soviet Union*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1994. pp. 75-98.

that garnered little support or result. These economic stagnations would play a major role in Brezhnev's downfall as a public figure.

One other domestic issue that arose from Brezhnev's Stalinization was the suppression of expression that was given and exercised under Khrushchev's leadership. With the ousting of Khrushchev, Brezhnev went to work on reversing these social reforms and clamping down on cultural freedom.[126] Political opponents, journalists, writers, and others were jailed under Brezhnev, as similarly done by Stalin. Yuri Andropov, the Chairman of the Committee of State Security (KGB) under Brezhnev, began requiring powers that were prevalent and powerful under Stalin's reign but did not garner much support from the Politburo. The cultural exercise that was under Khrushchev was ultimately destroyed under Brezhnev, resulting in the rise of several anti-government organizations within the USSR. Brezhnev left the USSR as a very powerful entity on the international scale yet again, but the political instability and the need for economic reforms would lessen public support domestically.

Gorbachev and the Fall

Leonid Brezhnev in his later years was suffering from several heart attacks in 1981-1982, where his leadership was split among four other leaders. Yuri Andropov, the previous chairman of the KGB, was appointed to be the Second General Secretary of the USSR and the General Secretary following Brezhnev's death. Brezhnev died on November 10, 1982, after which a state funeral was given. Andropov during the time following Brezhnev's death would use his support from the KGB to circulate rumors of the unfit candidates for General Secretary.[127] His efforts to curb the other candidates away from the position would allow Andropov to gain the position for himself.

Yuri Andropov's term as General Secretary was very brief, only lasting over one year in office. He did attempt to implement economic reforms and an anti-corruption campaign to reverse several of Brezhnev's previous policies, but they had little effect on the USSR. In February of 1984 he died from total kidney failure and its effects, leaving the position of General Secretary to Konstantin Chernenko. Chernenko had a much shorter term compared to Andropov: a little over 13 months in the position before dying in office. Chernenko's policies were similar to that of

[126] Service, Robert., *History of Modern Russia: From Tsarism to the Twenty-first Century,* 3rd edition. Penguin Books Ltd, 2009. p. 380-381
[127] Service, Robert., *History of Modern Russia: From Tsarism to the Twenty-first Century,* 3rd edition. Penguin Books Ltd, 2009. p. 426

Andropov but did not do much in enforcing his efforts in politics. These two leaders were the result of Brezhnev's policies and attempted to extend them but died without much impact on the USSR.

Mikhail Gorbachev was the successor of Chernenko and held the position of General Secretary until the fall of the USSR. The Politburo supported Gorbachev's rise to this position in fear of implementing another elderly candidate for the position.[128] Gorbachev was left with a USSR suffering domestically, but still put effort forward on the international scale. Gorbachev himself was not a prominent Soviet figure but aimed to turn that around by visiting various Eastern Bloc nations and giving speeches. He was the former chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee where he traveled across the world to represent the USSR in the Foreign atmosphere. His previous positions would ultimately pave the way for Gorbachev to instill his sense of foreign policy for the USSR.

One of his prominent political programs was the Perestroika campaign, which meant reconstruction. The Perestroika campaign involved the economic reforms following Brezhnev, increasing productivity, rebuilding the public work ethic, restructuring the agricultural field, and increasing the quality of goods in the USSR.[129] The program was widely successful initially and was often paired with the Glasnost campaign and the Demokratizatziya program. Gorbachev continued the support for the program by reversing several Brezhnev policies and implementing more democratic elements.[130] These elements would drastically improve domestic disputes that have arisen during the Brezhnev era and attempt to curb the foreign disputes to come.

Glasnost was the other major political campaign that featured the openness and expression of the USSR, where social bonds by previous leadership were unraveled. The CPSU grip on expression loosened during the time, the free criticism of the government was practiced, and the restructuring of the single-party state was implemented.[131] These political campaigns had a major impact on the domestic realm that enabled the expression and criticism of the state to be unregulated and without resistance. Paired with Glasnost was Demokratizatziya, a program that was implemented closer to the fall of the USSR with the shift towards democratic principles in the Communist Party through political reforms and positions.[132] These principles would have a lasting

[128] Taubman, William. *Gorbachev: His Life and Times*. New York City: Simon and Schuster, 2017. p. 211-212
[129] HOLMES, LESLIE. "Perestroika: A Reassessment." *Europe-Asia Studies* 65, no. 2 (2013): 186–197.
[130] Gidadhubli, R. G. "Perestroika and Glasnost." *Economic and Political Weekly* 22, no. 18 (1987): 784
[131] Aron, Leon. "For Truth and Goodness: The Credos of Glasnot." In *Roads to the Temple: Truth, Memory, Ideas, and Ideals in the Making of the Russian Revolution, 1987-1991*, 36–60. Yale University Press, 2012.
[132] Gidadhubli, R. G. "Perestroika and Glasnost." *Economic and Political Weekly* 22, no. 18 (1987): 785

impact on the USSR in the formation of the Russian Federation. However, with these massive shifts toward Domestic reforms came the disputes on an international scale.

One of the major disputes in foreign affairs was the ongoing cold war and its impact on the Soviet economy. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was a losing fight for the Soviets, with the Mujahedeen funded by the US, and Gorbachev wanted to pull out of the nation quickly. The previous use of power politics by Brezhnev turned the Soviets towards the Middle East, where the US-funded several militias in the area to protect democratic elements in the area. Gorbachev noted the various problems with pulling out of Afghanistan and the problems that would arise if they stayed there, such as the destruction of the authority of the USSR on the other socialist nations and the number of soldiers stranded in combat for a war that would go nowhere.[133] This was not a simple task for Gorbachev, or the USSR in general: the pulling out of Afghanistan would hurt the Soviet authority over socialist nations, and if they stayed there was the possibility for US intervention in Afghanistan.

Other foreign disputes include the political uprisings and the eventual fall of the USSR in the early 1990s. With the domestic programs of Glasnost and Perestroika, the Eastern Bloc states began to rebel politically and socially against the USSR. These efforts began with the reversal of the Brezhnev Doctrine, eliminating the USSR's right to intervene in the nation that would put all socialist states at harm. Gorbachev began this reversal by pulling out over 500,000 troops that were stationed throughout the Eastern Bloc states.[134] These actions would allow for the expression of political criticism of the Communist regimes without the fear of prison or the KGB. In the late 1980s, the beginnings of the USSR's collapse began with the elections and rebellions held throughout the Eastern Bloc states towards the domestic front.[135] These practices would eventually dissolve the USSR and Gorbachev's position as General Secretary towards the position of president.

Gorbachev's efforts in the domestic affairs of the nation show a great deal of support for democratic practices in eastern Europe. The expansion of expression throughout the USSR allowed for the criticism and reform of the single-party state, the expression of the western influence on

[133] "Notes from Politburo Meeting, 23 February 1987 (Excerpt) ," February 23, 1987, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Gorbachev Foundation, Moscow. Provided by Anatoly Chernyaev and translated by Gary Goldberg for CWIHP

[134] Taubman, William. *Gorbachev: His Life and Times*. New York City: Simon and Schuster, 2017. p. 386

[135] Marples, David R. "Revisiting the Collapse of the USSR." *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne Des Slavistes* 53, no. 2/4 (2011): 461–473.

media, and the dissolution of political corruption.[136] The need for these actions led to various works and practices executed by Gorbachev to give in to the people.[137] Gorbachev gave into the demands of the people of the Eastern Bloc where the implementation of democratic elections would not divert the nations away from Socialism. These elections allowed for multi-party competition against the Communist Parties of the Eastern Bloc, where many were elected out of office. These domestic efforts would ultimately turn the history of the USSR inside out with the formation of the Russian Federation, and a breakdown of the Iron Curtain.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Stalinization efforts had a major influence and impact on foreign affairs while having several Domestic disputes. Under Stalin, his exercise of power politics gave way for Soviet authority on the Socialist states around the world while the domestic front of the USSR was suffering from the Great Purges, lack of expression, and the economic instability from mass industrialization. Brezhnev took the same methods as Stalin in the foreign environment with the emphasis on détente policies and emphasis on the Warsaw Pact while the domestic realm was suffering from political corruption, major economic downturn, and restriction on expression. De-Stalinization, however, focused primarily on the domestic affairs of the USSR, leading to many foreign disputes. Khrushchev's efforts in De-Stalinization allowed for a minor restriction of expression, disbanding of labor camps, and release of political prisoners while the efforts in Cuba and abroad led to heated disputes between the US and USSR as well as the Sino-Soviet split in ideology. Gorbachev paved the way for democratic elements to keep the USSR afloat with economic reforms, freedom of expression, and political reforms which led to the dissolve of the Eastern Bloc and the USSR entirely.

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[137] Taubman, William. *Gorbachev: His Life and Times*. New York City: Simon and Schuster, 2017. p. 481

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Dueling Over Transgender Rights: RBG v. Scalia

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Abstract

Discrimination on the basis of gender involving LGBTQ+ individuals has garnered less legal support in the most recent Supreme Court cases. Previous court cases have ruled against members of the LGBTQ+ community, arguing that the laws of the Constitution of the United States do not protect gender identity. The latest rulings, however, have provided more resolutions in favor of LGBTQ+ community members in the form of new laws, amendments, and different interpretations within the justice system. Within this changing legal context, the following paper analyzes the case of *Doe v. Volusia County School Board* which pertains to the denial of rights of a transgender student to use school facilities for his identified gender. Ruth Bader Ginsburg is considered as the attorney for the plaintiff, arguing for transgender rights. Antonin Scalia is the proposed attorney for the defendant, arguing that there is not any constitutional basis for defending LGBTQ+ rights.

Keywords: transgender rights, LGBTQ+, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Antonin Scalia

Dueling Over Transgender Rights: RBG v. Scalia

Doe v. Volusia County School Board (2018) is a legal case that deals with the litigation between Doe, a transgender student, as the plaintiff and Volusia County School Board as the defendant. John Doe has been denied the access to restroom and changing facilities for his identified gender within the installations of the Volusia County School System, despite several requests. The following piece of writing will analyze this case dealing with discrimination of transgender individuals and will do so by using the criteria applied to a United States Supreme Court Case. Ruth Bader Ginsburg is proposed as the attorney for the plaintiff and Antonin Scalia corresponds as the attorney for the defendant. The purpose of this piece of writing is to examine the legal basis according to which discrimination on the basis of gender involving LGBTQ+ individuals has garnered less legal support in the most recent Supreme Court cases. First, some background information will be provided regarding the history of gender discrimination in legal cases, then the merits brief from Ruth Bader Ginsburg as the attorney for the plaintiff will be presented followed by the response from Antonin Scalia as the attorney for the defendant. To close,

an overall conclusion will be articulated including an analysis of recent cases and laws regarding transgender rights.

Discrimination on the basis of gender has been an ongoing debate for centuries. *Bradwell v. Illinois* (1871) was the first case presented to the United States Supreme Court dealing with gender discrimination. Myra Bradwell, a woman, sued the state of Illinois against a law that did not allow women to practice law in the state. The court ruled against Bradwell on the basis that the right for a person to practice law does not correspond to a privilege or immunity enumerated in the Constitution of the United States. However, it was not until the 1970s when gender classification was deemed unjustifiable in cases of this character as they appeared in front of the Supreme Court of the United States. *Cleveland Board of Education v. LaFleur* (1974) is among one of the first landmarks U.S. Supreme Court cases arguing against gender discrimination by challenging a Cleveland maternity rule requiring pregnant teachers to take unpaid maternity leave for a period of five months and a leave application submission two weeks prior to the absence. This law was established as unconstitutional under the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Two years later, *Craig v. Boren* (1976) was introduced to the Supreme Court, a case ruled on the basis of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. On this occasion, an Oklahoma law was deemed as unconstitutional since it restricted the purchase of alcohol to men under the age of twenty-one years, discriminating against men between eighteen and twenty-one years old, given the age requirement for women was only eighteen years old.

With the passing of time, legal cases involving gender discrimination have evolved from focusing only on discrimination towards men and women, to including members of the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer or Questioning (LGBTQ+) community. *Bowers v. Hardwick* (1986) is the first-ever case in the United States Supreme Court dealing with couples of the same sex. This case argued the constitutionality of a Georgia law that criminalized sodomy even when consensual. The Supreme Court ruled Georgia's sodomy law as constitutional arguing that this is not a right for homosexual individuals protected under the Constitution and that states have the power to regulate private conduct in circumstances of this character. This decision was explicitly overruled almost two decades later by the case *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003) which declared that a Texas law categorizing certain sexual acts among individuals of the same sex as a crime, was a regulation that violated the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The court argued that private conduct involving life choices and relationships are protected under the Due Process

Clause and that the government does not have the right to intervene in these subjects without having a specific goal.

In the present, members of the LGBTQ+ community continue to experience discrimination as one of the biggest challenges in their day-to-day lives. According to a survey by the Center for American Progress in 2020, members of Generation Z who are LGBTQ+ are more likely to experience discrimination in educational institutions, access to housing, and economic development (Mahowald, Theogene, Le, and Azoulay, 2021). About three out of five Gen Z members reported having experienced discrimination which directly affected their chances to be hired and thus their financial situation (Mahowald, Theogene, Le, and Azoulay, 2021). These events also have adverse effects on the mental and physical well-being of members of LGBTQ+ individuals, limiting their ability to live a normal life as members of society by freely expressing their gender identification. Therefore, it is important to establish new laws and regulations that take into account this sector of the population with the objective of reducing discrimination and promoting better inclusion, so that every individual can freely enjoy their rights and liberties.

Merits Brief by Plaintiff's Attorney Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Statement of Facts

John Doe along with his parents and close friends Susan and Jack Doe ("Plaintiff") sues the defendant, Volusia County School Board ("VCSB"). John is a fifteen-year-old transgender boy, a sophomore at the Volusia County School District in Florida. At an early age, John experienced gender dysphoria, "distress that may occur due to the incongruence between an individual's expressed gender and one's assigned gender" (Fallon & Hegde, 2020, para. 1). At the age of six, he realized that he identified himself as a boy even though he was born female. John has lived as a boy in every aspect of his life since age seven, including but not limited to changing his name to a male-identified, going by male pronouns, dress and personal appearance as a boy, hormone therapy, chest reconstruction surgery, and the use of the men's restroom in public.

John's parents and medical providers advised, supported, and requested that John be treated according to his gender identification to prevent segregation that could cause him great emotional distress and health problems. However, VCSB authorities and staff refused to do so, after multiple requests, by not allowing John to use facilities for his gender identification such as restrooms and lockers. As an alternative, John was directed to use single-use restrooms and different changing facilities than those used by other boys, which made him feel uncomfortable, disrespected, and

stigmatized. Thus, VCSB "has discriminated against John on the basis of sex, including...gender identity, transgender status, and nonconformity to sex-based stereotypes," (Doe v. Volusia County School Board, 42 U.S.C. § 1983, 2018, p. 3) for the simple fact that he is transgender.

As a result of this discriminatory treatment, John's mental and physical health has been greatly affected. He suffers from trichotillomania, an impulse-control mental disorder that causes him to pull out his own eyelashes (Hair, 2018). Additionally, John reduces his fluid intake while at school to completely avoid the use of designated restroom facilities that cause him to feel marginalized and anxious. Among the consequences of this act, John is more likely to suffer urinary tract infections, possible dehydration, and has more stress leading him to not be able to properly focus on school work.

Type of Scrutiny

The case presented to the court deals with discrimination on the basis of gender, therefore it has the stans to be judged according to intermediate scrutiny. The reason for this lies in the fact that classifications on the basis of gender do not generally concern relevant government interests, but are instead founded in stereotypes established by the members of society (Karst, 1997). Therefore, the use of elevated scrutiny provides the authority to prevent discrimination by promoting the application of desirable laws that protect the rights and liberties of individuals as enumerated in the Constitution of the United States. As established by the court in *Craig v. Boren* (1976), gender classification must relate to substantially important government objectives. In contrast, the policies and behavior by VCSB, restricting John from using facilities for his gender identification, do not correspond to regulations that entail government interests of substantial significance. Instead, these regulations cause John physical and mental damages connected to his experience of being discriminated against in the setting of his public academic institution.

Applying the two-part test for the use of intermediate scrutiny we must ask the proper questions which follow (Cornell Law School, Intermediate Scrutiny). First, does the regulation in question correspond to an important government interest? Yes, the privacy of individuals and that of minors, in particular, is a subject of important government interest. Individuals have the right to privacy when entering public restrooms, this includes public educational institutions as it is the case of VCSB schools. Second, is the regulation related to this important government interest? No, the regulation by VCSB is not specifically oriented to protect the privacy of minors while using restrooms and changing rooms for their birth gender. Instead, the objective of this regulation aims

to prevent transgender individuals, like John, from accessing facilities for their identified gender. Therefore, this regulation is discriminatory in nature on the basis of gender and does not fulfill objectives regarding the privacy of students, which would correspond to a relevant government interest.

Argument

Proposition of Law No. I *Fourteenth Amendmen*t: Equal Protection Clause.

VCSB is denying John of his rights under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment from the United States Constitution. This law establishes that "nor shall any State deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws" (US Const. Amdt. 14, 1983). John is not receiving equal protection under the law when he is being required to use separate facilities than those individuals of the gender he identifies with at his public educational institution. The law deems discrimination on the basis of gender as unconstitutional, where John is being discriminated against for being transgender. Thus, intermediate scrutiny must be applied for the resolution of this case since the acts by the defendant while imposing its regulations have promoted damage and continue to do so on John's physical and mental well-being. According to the active review of classifications, government actions or classifications which contradict the Fourteenth Amendment must be justified as an important government interest by means that are substantially related to that interest. In this case, the defendant does not comply with the requirement of promoting an important government interest to have the authority to trespass the rights established in the Fourteenth Amendment with the goal of safeguarding that relevant state interest through means that relate to it.

In *Romer v. Evans* (1996) it was upheld that States do not have the authority to modify their laws with the purpose of denying basic legal protections to homosexual individuals which are provided to heterosexual individuals. This type of act corresponds to a violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, by discriminating against a group of people and denying them equal protection under the laws based on their gender identity. Thus, VCSB as a public education system that receives federal funding, cannot deny students certain protections based on their gender identity. Every student has the right to be protected from unnecessary physical and mental harm caused by discrimination within the educational institution. In the case of John, not having access to use facilities for his gender identification has stigmatized, marginalized, as well as physically and mentally affected him by the fact that the Defendant is

denying him the same rights and equal protection as other students within the educational institution.

Proposition of Law No. II: *Title IX of Education Amendments Act of 1972.*

Under the Education Amendments Act of 1972, Title IX establishes that "no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance" (2018, para. 1). John attends a public educational institution, under the jurisdiction of VCSB, which receives financial assistance from the Federal government of the United States. Since this institution does not fit within any of the explicit exceptions to this law, it must abridge the principles established in the text. Denying John access to restroom facilities and changing rooms for his identified gender within a federally funded public institution trespasses John's rights as a student under Title IX.

Conclusion of the Plaintiff

After presenting the information above, John seeks to obtain declaratory judgment since he has been discriminated against on the basis of gender by VSCB and its conduct which does not allow him to use facilities designated for his identified gender. These practices violate the principles established in the Title IX Education Amendments Act of 1972 and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution. Additionally, John seeks injunctive relief to prevent VCSB to continue with its discriminatory practices in the future, including discrimination due to gender identity and the designation of separate facilities for transgender individuals, practices that trespass Title IX, and the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

Response from the Defendant's Attorney Antonin Scalia

Introductory Statement

As the attorney for the defendant, Volusia County School Board, the clarification must be made regarding the school district's interests, which are those that benefit the student body by promoting their well-being and learning while attending their educational institutions. John and his parents were denied permission for John, as part of the student body, to access facilities designated for males since even though John identifies himself as a male, he was assigned female at birth. The school board acted in its best interest to protect the rights and privacy of other students in the institution while providing John with alternative accommodations to satisfy his needs while

at the educational institution. The school district does not perform these acts with the intent of discriminating against John on the basis of his gender identification, as he is a student of the public school system holding the same rights and privileges as any other student, therefore he receives equal treatment as any of his peers at the educational institution.

Type of Scrutiny

The case in question ought to be analyzed according to rational basis review since discrimination can be justified to protect relevant state interests which require a specific type of classification of individuals (Foley v. Connelie, 1978). VCSB seeks to protect the privacy of minors by preventing John, assigned female at birth, from entering the men's restroom and locker rooms. If John were to be allowed to share the same facilities as male-born individuals, he would be violating their privacy as minors which constitutes a relevant state interest. Thus, VCSB is unable to provide a better solution than making available separate facilities for John, which in the end fulfill his needs and protect the rights of other students.

Access to gender-identified facilities does not correspond to a "fundamental right" as established in *Skinner v. Oklahoma ex rel. Williamson* (1942). This case dealt with the issue of forced sterilization on the basis of repeated criminal offenses as considered to be connected to the genetics of an individual, enforced by an Oklahoma law. The court upheld this law unconstitutional under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, defining procreation as a fundamental right. The case in question under this court does not involve a fundamental right as it is procreation in the case mentioned above. Therefore heightened scrutiny does not apply for the analysis of the court, thus rational basis review ought to be used instead. Being able to utilize spaces that match the gender identifications of individuals is not a right established in the body of the Constitution, this being said, the defendant is not trespassing John's rights by any means by providing him with specific facilities to access to fulfill his needs while at the educational institution.

Applying the steps required for the application of the rational basis test, as follows (Cornell Law School, Rational Basis Test). Does the ordinance promoted by VCSB have a legitimate state interest? Yes, protecting the privacy of minors within their public educational institution is of great weight according to state interests. Next, is there a rational connection between the ordinance and its goals? Yes, providing John with access to alternative facilities instead of allowing him to use the male restrooms and changing rooms fulfills the legitimate purpose of protecting the privacy of

other minors who attend the school. Additionally, the case in question does not deal with a fundamental right, thus the logic of the use of rational basis review to better approach the suspect classification presented.

Argument in Response to Plaintiff

Proposition of Law No. I: *Fourteenth Amendmen*t: Equal Protection Clause.

VCSB does not violate the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment since its regulations and actions have been performed to protect a legitimate state interest. Safeguarding the privacy of minors while using public spaces such as restrooms and changing rooms is indeed a relevant concern for the state, thus it is the obligation of the defendant to ensure that this vulnerable population is receiving the necessary protection while attending a public educational institution. In addition, the rights of transgender individuals to access facilities of their identified gender are not explicitly stated in the Constitution of the United States. Therefore, the need to clarify that the Equal Protection Clause only prevents actions from the government against individuals who are properly exercising their rights. Even so, the law does not guarantee the protection of rights which are not explicit in the text of the Constitution. In the case mentioned previously, *Skinner v. Oklahoma ex rel. Williamson* (1942) dealing with the issue of forced sterilization by an Oklahoma law on the basis of repeated criminal offenses, it was upheld by the court that the law was unconstitutional under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment since it involves the fundamental right of procreation. Despite this, John as a transgender student does not have explicit rights under the law to use facilities for his gender identification.

Additionally, the current question posed to the court would be more properly addressed via the legislative process within each state. The United States of America is a wide territory, where every state has its own culture, traditions, and history. All these factors must be taken into account previous to the modification of any relevant ruling that may negatively affect individuals from specific regions. Hence, it is not the duty of the Supreme Court to work in areas that do not correspond to its main purpose as the judicial power but instead instigates justices to legislate from the bench and interfere with the tasks of the legislative power.

Proposition of Law No. II: *Title IX of Education Amendments Act of 1972.*

VCSB does not violate Title IX since John has not been denied any benefits provided by the Federal government to the school. As a student, John has been capable of attending the public school free of charge, as well as using the services and facilities as any other student. After denying

access to the men's restroom due to concerns regarding the privacy of other students, the school has provided John access to a different facility with regards to restroom facilities, this is an aid provided to the student and does not have any intent to discriminate against him for being transgender, rather it keeps in mind important state interests while still satisfying John's needs.

It is also relevant to point out that Title IX refers to "sex," but nowhere in the text can the words gender identity or gender orientation be found. Therefore, the Defendant is not discriminating on the basis of sex since John was naturally born female in terms of sex. John has never been banned by VCSB from using facilities for females, such as restrooms within the institution. It is a case different if John acquires a perception of discrimination when he is allowed to use facilities for his original gender, which corresponds to that of a female. Lastly, since VCSB is not violating any of the clauses established on Title IX, there is no need to be part of the institutions applicable for exceptions from this regulation.

Conclusion of the Defendant

Volusia County School Board, the defendant, has not established any regulations that violate the Title IX Education Amendments Act of 1972 nor the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution. Instead, proper accommodations and assistance have been provided by the institution with the objective of satisfying John's needs during his time at the institution. John, like any other student, has the right to an education that is free, equitable and does not allow discrimination. VCSB is complying with protecting this right under the laws established both in Title IX and the Constitution. Not allowing John to access the men's restrooms rests in a concern involving the important government interest of protecting the privacy rights of other minors in the institution. From this perspective, there are not enough grounds for VCSB to be required to provide declaratory judgment or injunctive relief to the plaintiff.

Overall Conclusion

The case above was solved in favor of John Doe with the use of intermediate scrutiny by the court. Declaratory judgment was granted and the Court found Volusia County School Board guilty of violating Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The basis of this resolution lies in the fact that the policies enforced by the defendant have injured and continue to injure John mentally and physically, as described in the introductory statement by the attorney of the plaintiff. The court also issued permanent

injunctions involving: access for John to his gender-identified facilities including restrooms and changing rooms within the institution and the right to be treated as a male in all aspects of his life, prohibition to VCSB to enforce any regulations in the future that may discriminate against transgender students, requiring the defendant to clarify its policies with regards to the inclusion of gender identification and the prohibition of discrimination, the requirement for district-wide training on Title IX for all school officials, and monitoring of the school board's procedures ensuring the proper application of Title IX within the county educational institutions. Lastly, the plaintiff was awarded the reparation for the damages produced by VCSB in an amount determined by the court, as well as the cost involved with the legal process.

An increasing number of cases involving members of the LGBTQ+ community, similar to the one examined in the body of this paper, have reached the courts in recent years. *Adams v. School Board of St. Johns County* (2020) is a case that involved Adams, a transgender boy like John, who was treated as a boy by everyone at school in all aspects, with the exception of using the men's restroom. He was only allowed to use multi-stall girl's restrooms or a gender-neutral restroom. His family and he personally submitted several requests and complaints. The effects of this discriminatory treatment by the School Board of St. Johns county had negative impacts on the physical and mental health of Adams. The Court of Appeals affirmed the previous judgment established by the District Court, concluding that the policy in place established by John's County School district which prohibited Adams to use the boy's restroom as a transgender student, did not violate Title IX nor the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

Later in the same year, *Bostock v. Clayton County (2020)* made its way to the Supreme Court, dealing with a group of cases where homosexual or transgender long-time employees were fired simply due to their gender identification. The court established that an employer violates Title VII when intentionally firing an employee on the basis of sex. As established by the law, "Title VII prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex and national origin" (1964). Describing the following as unlawful practices by employers: firing or not hiring an employee, establishing unfair classifications, and promoting segregation among employees on the basis of "race, color, religion, sex, or national origin." This case established the grounds for a new interpretation in 2021, regarding Title IX about discrimination, to include sexual orientation and gender identity within the scope of characteristics of individuals protected from discrimination within the educational setting (Enforcement of Title IX, 2021). A couple of months previous to

the approval of this new interpretation of Title IX, *Grimm v. Gloucester County School Board* (2020) became the first legal case ruled in favor of a transgender student with regards to restroom policies and gender identification. The court established that school bathroom policies that discriminate against transgender students on the basis of gender identification violate the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. This case was held by using heightened scrutiny according to which privacy concerns were the regulation by the school board was found to not be relevant to protect the privacy of students by banning transgender students from using facilities for their gender identification since it does not relate to substantially important state interests. The school was also found guilty of a violation of Title IX when refusing to update the school records of the student with the appropriate gender identification according to state records. Lastly, the court made a remark regarding the importance of empowering youth towards a good future rather than striking down their opportunities by adhering to outdated traditional beliefs.

Final Thoughts and Questions for the Future

With time and changes in society, cases involving discrimination on the basis of gender that are targeted towards members of the LGBTQ+ community have progressively found less legal support in the Supreme Court through laws including the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Despite the progress made in the past decades, there is still much work to be done to reduce and eventually eradicate the worrying levels of gender-based discrimination that negatively affect the positive development of today's society by creating divisions instead of inclusion.

In the meantime, big questions remain yet to be answered in today's society. First, is the discrimination of gender applied to facilities such as restrooms, today's application of the separate but equal doctrine in society? Second, would the establishment of all-gender restrooms be the final response to this issue in the future? Third, how would the right to individual privacy be considered within this context? Society may be moving towards a new era in terms of the interpretation of gender identity to better acknowledge the importance of intersectionality.

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"Not quite what you were expecting, right?": Women and the Mind in *The Matrix*

Anna Ford

An action and cyberpunk blockbuster, the 1999 film *The Matrix* has fascinated audiences and scholars alike. Loved for its action sequences and characters by the public, and a divisive topic of critical conversation to scholars, there is no shortage of opinions on its value. As the audience navigates the virtual world of the Matrix and the philosophy that is contained within, there is little doubt that Neo is the prodigal savior of humanity that Morpheus has been looking for. Though there is a heavy emphasis on the male characters and the intense action and philosophical scenes they are given, this does not exclude a powerful message from the female characters of the film. Through the character of Trinity, the audience enters the world of *The Matrix,* and it is because of her that Neo meets Morpheus, leaves the Matrix, and ultimately becomes the One that was foretold. Without the interference of Trinity and the guiding voice of the Oracle, it is unlikely that Neo, though ultimately powerful, would have been able to make the journey out of the Matrix and develop his powers in the same way. For every great philosophical and narratively necessary choice Neo makes, female characters are intricately tied to the events and provide a more experienced pair of eyes on his journey. In the audience mind's, Neo may be the great philosopher guided by Morpheus into the light of truth, but there is little doubt in the film that there are women further along in that pursuit than Neo at every turn. In *The Matrix*, the Wachowskis question foundational elements of Western philosophy, such as Plato's ideas of Truth and representation, by demonstrating how they are part of the patriarchal tradition. The Wachowskis challenge this tradition by presenting women as having an equal understanding of what is "real" rather than associating this knowledge exclusively with male characters. Ultimately, the Wachowskis argue that women are not relegated to the body and instead, subvert this essentialist philosophical tradition by aligning female characters like Trinity and the Oracle with the mind. In doing so they move beyond the mere questioning of Truth and reality and question the "Truth" of essentialist philosophical traditions in Western philosophy.

The themes of gender and the body, as well as philosophy, have been heavily involved in *The Matrix* and the context surrounding it. Due to the personal lives of the Wachowskis (the directors/creators of the film and subsequent series), gender has long been a topic surrounding the film. After its release both directors came out as transgender women, and it has been confirmed by

Lilly Wachowski as a transgender allegory (Newsbeat). The confirmation of this interpretation has prompted its re-examination and the reemergence of previous fan analyses of its portrayal of gender experience[138]. This contextual meaning can radically affect its interpretation, but this analysis of gender and philosophy will focus on the presentation of the female characters in relation to the mind and body dichotomy within the film, rather than exploring the way it portrays gender and the trans experience. The relationship between technology and the mind/body also has contextual roots as they are central parts of cyberpunk as a genre. The genre explores the visceral connection and invasion of the body and mind by technology, and even in the 1980s saw it not as a far future but as a natural extension of the technology-flooded world that was the present (Sterling xi). Coming over a decade after the cyberpunk manifesto of *Mirrorshades* and the further development of the genre, it is little wonder that the film takes dystopia and cyberpunk fiction to the very literal invasion of the body and control of the mind that is seen. The Wachowskis portray humanity as "plugged in" to the Matrix from birth until death, existing docile and fully controlled by machines. What the body is able to experience and what the controlled mind is able to do are key concepts directly tied to the genre tradition it builds out of.

While the context surrounding the film is most obviously centered in its gendered and bodily elements, the critical conversation that surrounds it does not focus heavily on these aspects. Though works (such as those by Jason Haslam, David Gunkel, Patricia Melzer, and G. Christopher Williams) discuss the female characters such as Trinity and the Oracle and their place in the film, they are by no means the majority of the conversation. Reviews of *The Matrix* from its premiere show that audiences and reviewers were well aware of its dense content, with vocabulary and "a wild hodgepodge of classical references" creating an experience that though visually entrancing required a great deal of explanation (Maslin). Some even considered it to be significantly too long in run-time and so full of varying elements (from Lewis Carroll, eastern philosophy, Christian mysticism, Chosen Ones, and babies grown in pods) "as to prove utterly indigestible" (McCarthy). The critical conversation around *The Matrix* is predominantly focused on the heavy use of philosophy and religion within. Seen as both a pop-culture attempt at philosophy fallen short and a work of great value, the Wachowskis' work finds itself among mixed reviews. For this reason, writings on the work and philosophy fall into two broad categories: those who defend its use of

[138]Critics that focus on the analysis of *The Matrix* as a representation of transgender experience are: Charley Archer,Yasmine Evelyn Keough, Canela López, and Emily VanDerWerff.

philosophy and those who primarily find fault. I will be utilizing critical works from both categories to bring the connection between how *The Matrix* uses philosophy and how it utilizes female characters. While I argue that the film's use of and work with philosophy are tied to the earlier focus on gender and the body, there is no critical interpretation that ties together the use of philosophy and the representation of female characters.

Philosophy in the Film

The Matrix draws on a broad range of philosophical concepts, some in obvious and heavy-handed methods and others more subtly. In doing so, there are those who consider the evocations and allusion to such concepts a failing in the film to properly understand and depict such concepts. While there is a great deal of critical ink that has been spilled on whether or not philosophy has been done "correctly," with critics arguing for and against a variety of theories, there is also the peculiar case of the work of philosopher Jean Baudrillard. The Wachowskis were very open in acknowledging that *Simulacra and Simulation* by Baudrillard was an influential work and required reading for part of the cast. There are entire lines spoken by Morpheus that are taken directly from Baudrillard's work, and the book is seen in Neo's apartment shortly after his introduction (00:08:26). Despite the clear utilization of his work Baudrillard has made no secret of his disinterest in *The Matrix*. According to Baudrillard, the film is one of many misunderstandings and therefore misrepresentations of his work. It is this notion of fidelity to his work that has left lasting damage on assessments of *The Matrix*'s use of Baudrillard's work, according to Catherine Constance in *Adapting Philosophy: Jean Baudrillard and* The Matrix Trilogy (10). When prompted in an interview to discuss it and its depiction of a vision from his work Baudrillard expresses that he is unimpressed by its lack of originality in doing so. He goes on to acknowledge that while *The Matrix* does present his idea it is not the first to do so and, "*The Matrix*'s value is chiefly as a synthesis of all that. But there the set-up is cruder and does not truly evoke the problem" (Baudrillard).

In addition to his view of the film as unable to "truly evoke the problem" Baudrillard also saw it as confusing the new issues of simulation with Platonic elements (Baudrillard). One of the most influential philosophers to the creation of the film saw it as a failure of representation, though he did more than most in acknowledging that there is value in its synthesis (Baudrillard). His valuation of its relationship to other forms of media, such as *The Truman Show* or *Minority Report,* and the way they deal with the blurring distinction between what is real and what is virtual is

centered around his own ideas of conceptual faithfulness. Thus, the conversation surrounding this trilogy and its worth is "dominated by the question of fidelity to the 'original' source" (Constable 10). Outside of this issue of philosophical fidelity, the value of the synthesis and expansion of previous ideas can be found in the way *The Matrix* works with philosophical concepts beyond Baudrillard's and creates new meaning in the interplay between the theories it evokes.

As one of the most obvious philosophical concepts evoked, Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" is often used when speaking about the film. Despite a great deal of philosophical discussion of the topic, there is no agreement on the ways *The Matrix* utilizes this concept and to what degree it succeeds. In a strictly Platonic reading, Neo functions as Plato's philosopher making the journey from the darkness of the cave (or in this case the simulation that is the Matrix) into the light of Truth. The Matrix functions as the cave where shadows upon the wall are imperfect recreations of what is real, with the code telling the human mind what it should be receiving without the presence of anything "real." Much like Plato's philosopher, Neo experiences pain and confusion upon leaving his false reality, and it is a long adjustment period before he can see the Truth. Neo undergoes his own process of making out the "reflections of people and so in the water" in the outside world to finally being "able to discern and feast his eyes on the sun" without dependence on distorted interpretations (Plato 62). Unable to function on his own after being ejected from his pod, Neo is the philosopher blinded by sunlight for the first time as he begins his journey (00:36:02-06). The moment at the end of the film when Neo looks up and is able to see the code creating the building and agents from within the simulation is the clear parallel to Plato's philosopher being able to gaze upon the sun (02:05:37). The moment when conceptual knowledge that the Matrix is simply lines of code being fed to his brain becomes clear is the moment it is no longer necessary for an intermediary between the philosopher and "the sun on its own, in its proper place" (Plato 62). This reading functions as an introduction to Plato's work through a clear diagnosis of it as a retelling of the "Allegory of the Cave" without consideration to the ways the Wachowskis are departing from these foundational works to create new meanings and new goals.

It is due to the film's status as more than a mere retelling of Plato or Baudrillard's work that scholars have written in condemnation of the way the Wachowskis are using philosophy incorrectly. It is scholars such as Mark Conard who come to the conclusion that there is a failing in the departure from the spirit of the philosophy it evokes. In "*The Matrix*, the Cave, and the Cogito" Conard argues that the film evokes the work and ideas of Plato and Descartes but does not

hold true to the spirit and objective nature of the philosophy. Ultimately, he argues that the assertions of reality are based not on intellectual and objective intuition, but instead it is based upon "a gut feeling. It's like being in love, it's completely subjective" and because it is subjective it does not "necessarily say anything at all about reality" (219). Due to its deviation from the purely intellectual concepts of Truth it evoked, Conard concludes that at the end "Neo is like a prisoner in Plato's cave waking from a dream, seeing the shadows on the wall, and taking that as proof he is no longer dreaming" (219). From a purely philosophical view the failure to transcend may well be the case but to take such a stance is to consider *The Matrix* as devoid of meaning in its own right and a mere vessel carrying other concepts. The Wachowskis are not failing to represent a concept but are instead evoking its significance and place in the Western cultural consciousness in order to create new meaning and depart from the search for pure Truth. The film is not a work that follows Plato's ideas of the mind over the body in the hunt for truth; instead, it turns back to the necessity of the body and its place as part of the human experience. There is no claim to a central and unquestionable reality but instead, it acknowledges that reality, be it in the "real" world or the Matrix, can only be known through the information that we believe we are experiencing, and that there may be no "real."

This distinction between what is "real" and what is not is one of the primary binaries of the film and ultimately the audience can come to many conclusions about the validity of the two sides. By the end of *The Matrix,* however, there is a great deal of uncertainty as to whether or not these binaries actually exist at all. In presenting the question of reality and virtual construction, the Wachowskis never give the audience a clear answer of how "real" is defined. As Morpheus asks Neo "What is real?(00:40:16)" Is it what the characters are experiencing outside of the Matrix in the "real world"? Is this any more real than the electrical signals that the Matrix is sending to them while they are in the simulation if we define reality as the electrical signals that are sent to the brain? In much the same way the binary of red pill or blue pill is not as restrictive as it appears; the duality of the mind and the body, or reality and construction, is less restrictive than it originally appears. In "The Virtual Dialectics: Re-thinking *The Matrix* and its Significance," David Gunkel explores the use of binaries in the film and their relationship to other views of virtual reality. In doing so Gunkel argues that through the infamous choice of the red pill or the blue pill, *The Matrix* is reenacting a core principle of Western philosophy. The metaphor of a choice between two pills is part of a larger tradition in which "philosophy consistently decides for truth as opposed to falsity.

Being as opposed to appearance, authenticity as opposed to inauthenticity, and the real as opposed to illusion" (199). These binaries are presented as strictly defined options that must be chosen between, but Gunkel brings up the idea that Neo could have selected neither the blue pill (trapping him within the illusion of the Matrix with no memory) nor the red pill (choosing to leave the Matrix in search of truth in the real world) and instead walked away from the situation and remained within the Matrix fully aware (213). Though the binary seemed strictly defined, there were options outside of it, and therefore "[it] is not a matter of simply choosing one or the other, but of questioning the structure, necessity, and stakes of this particular and limited set of alternatives" (213). This seeming either/or choice that is presented in the philosophical red pill or blue pill scenario, along with its false limitations, parallels the treatment of the mind and body in the determination of reality. The choice between believing only what the mind experiences and believing that which the physical body experiences is similarly uncertain, and though the film seems to side with the body, the mind is still given great significance in a way that defies this strict binary.

This same subversion of binary is demonstrated in the Wachowskis' treatment of gender within *The Matrix*. These subversions of gender expectations can be seen most clearly by establishing a feminist understanding of gender and how women are typically aligned in relation to the body. Simone de Beauvoir expands on the ways women are designated as "Other" in relation to the male "Subject" in her work *The Second Sex*. She argues that "woman" is defined by negatives and lack, and is thus denied full subjectivity in philosophical discourse and Western culture at large. The denial of full subjectivity has been attributed to a variety of secular and religious reasons, but it is this definition of woman against man that constructs the masculine and feminine dichotomy. Man is seen as the universal subject, comparable to that of Plato's "thing itself." Woman is defined against man, de Beauvoir argues, because it has been decided "there is an absolute human type, that is masculine. Woman has ovaries and a uterus; such are the particular conditions that lock her in her subjectivity" (5). The standard for philosophy, and culture more broadly, is males and women are therefore defined by the "peculiarities" which differ from the "absolute human type" (5). To expand the constructed opposition of the masculine and feminine that de Beauvoir argues is in place, the alignment of women with the body must have a mirror. If women are defined through their physical bodies, then men must be defined by their minds. Without the concern of the physical form to limit and define the "human type," it is the mind which

serves its definition (5). Rather than be burdened by the body, man "grasps his body as a direct and normal link with the world that he believes he apprehends in all objectivity" while simultaneously considering "women's body an obstacle, a prison, burdened by everything that particularizes it" (5). This alignment of the mind with men falls in line with Plato's philosopher as well as Plato himself. The idea of a great mind who seeks out Truth through reason is a man who has gained an understanding of reality. It is de Beauvoir who addresses the question of where the great male mind leaves women, and it is through this understanding that the female characters in the film can be best analyzed.

This idea of women as defined by their bodies is also heavily addressed in feminist film theory and work surrounding the "Male Gaze." First discussed by Laura Mulvey in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" the Male Gaze creates the camera as a white male gaze upon female characters who function as sources of visual and erotic pleasure for the voyeuristic viewer. According to Mulvey, "in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female" (62). It is thus a source of active pleasure for the viewer that the passive and gazed upon the figure of the woman is created on screen. They function not to create meaning but instead to operate passively as an object of pleasure that has been "styled accordingly" for the projected male fantasy (62). Mulvey goes on to write that "women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact" and it is this crafted appearance and meaning of the female figure that aligns with woman as confined "to her place as bearer, not maker, of meaning" (62, 59). The Male Gaze crafts women on screen as objects for the pleasure of the viewer that are given meaning in relation to this connection to men rather than being the creators of their own meaning. They are not active participants but instead passive receivers of the Male Gaze. As a figure that stands "as a signifier for the male other" and the bearers of meaning this projection of women on screen through the use of the Male Gaze is very clearly in alignment with de Beauvoir's argument that women as defined by the body and Other against the male Subject (59). By examining the female characters within *The Matrix* through these presentations of women as defined by the body in various ways it becomes possible to analyze the meaning behind the way the Wachowskis have presented and utilized these characters.

The Presentation of Female Characters

Though the central character of the film is Neo, the introduction of the central female character happens first. Trinity is the central character of the opening scene as she is both one of the first characters the audience hears speak and the character that we are following for the impossible fight and escape that follows. The implications of the initial introduction of Trinity as armed police officers burst through the door to apprehend her is that the unknown character is dangerous in some way (00:01:53-59). If she were not dangerous there would be no need for such extreme measures to apprehend her and the suspense be alleviated by the revelation that she is sitting at a table with her back to the door (00:01:57). The cut to the officers outside the building and the lieutenant dismissing the danger posed by Trinity increases the suspense surrounding her abilities. This increase in tension is most clearly seen in the final interactions between Agent Smith and the police lieutenant. Revealing that the agents were aware of Trinity's presence and working with police, Agent Smith notes that they were not to engage her. The lieutenant arrogantly responds, "I think we can handle one little girl" and upon being dismissed by the agents brushing past him he adds nervously, "I sent two units. They're bringing her down now" (00:02:39-49). The previously overconfident lieutenant is suddenly nervous, and Agent Smith adds to this anxiety in a close-up shot in which he informs the lieutenant, "No. Your men are already dead (00:02:50-53)." This opening sequence, while far less visually captivating than the reality-defying action sequence immediately following it, provides the audience with an easy assumption and a sense of underestimation. The brief glimpse given of Trinity does lend credence to the assertion of the lieutenant that she is not large or imposing, but the condescension and dismissal of his calling her a "little girl" is an ill-fitting description (00:02:39-41). The lieutenant expects that as a woman Trinity will be delicate, unresisting, and incapable of being more than passive acquiescence to his orders. While slight in frame and sitting at a laptop, Trinity is portrayed as a powerful figure through the use of a close low-angle shot slowly revealing her face from behind the laptop screen (00:01:59-02:05). This shot, particularly through the lingering reveal of her eyes, gives Trinity the appearance of power despite her physically submissive gesture of putting her hands above her head (00:02:01-05). The audience then is left with the impression that, while assumed at a disadvantage, Trinity holds power in the scene and therefore the assertion that the officers "can handle one little girl" rests uneasily (00:02:39-41). It is then no surprise to the audience that the weak assurance of two units of police officers bringing her down to the street is met immediately with great assurance

that the men "are already dead" (00:02:52-53). Though not physically imposing, there is a clear implication that as Trinity sits at her computer she is dangerous.

While the opening scene of *The Matrix* establishes the importance of Trinity to the film through her impressive control of the simulation, her alignment with the mind first becomes clear when she and Neo meet. The expectation and the reality of Trinity's identity depicts the masculine and feminine dichotomy which maintains men as defined by their minds rather than the constraints of the body. Trinity's abilities subvert this understanding and Neo's reaction to the identity reveal shows this:

Neo: Who are you?

Trinity: My name is Trinity.

Neo: Trinity. *The* Trinity? That cracked the IRS D-base?

Trinity: That was a long time ago.

Neo: Jesus.

Trinity: What?

Neo: I just thought, um… you were a guy.

Trinity: Most guys do. (00:10:15-10:35)

Without knowing the identity of a skilled hacker with the call sign of Trinity, Neo assumed the individual was male. This assumed connection between the mind and that which is masculine represents the essentialist ideas of the masculine and feminine dichotomy. This assumption that Neo admits to is an understood generalization of most hackers. This is further compounded by Trinity's statement that "most guys" assume she is a man because most hackers are men (00:10:35). The revelation of her well-known hacking skills helps to align her character with the mind through her intellect in addition to her abilities to manipulate the Matrix. While the fight at the beginning of the film has nothing to do with the body and everything to do with the mind, in the audience's understanding this is the moment that suggests Trinity is an intellectual figure, not merely an athletic figure. The revelation of these skills at the club is also very deliberately chosen to combat the alignment of Trinity with the body. Before Trinity walks over to Neo, the camera pans to show the rest of the club. The club is dimly lit and occupied by the sensual press of androgynous dancing bodies (00:09:41-10:00). It is this establishment of the club and its events that align the location with the body and provide the needed contrast for the conversation between Trinity and Neo. Within this setting, it would have been easy to present her to the audience as a means of visual

pleasure. Despite the clear shots of bodies that are seen in the setting, the interaction between Trinity and Neo is a series of close-ups and over- the- shoulder shots that do not invite the audience to see her body, but instead focus on her face and by extension her mind (00:10:15-35). This contrast combines with the subject of Trinity's skills to align her character with the mind in much the same way that Neo's character is being defined by his isolation from the events of the club.

The decision made by the Wachowskis to present Trinity in clothing that though often very tight is not overly revealing is a deliberate choice. Presenting female characters in a largely non-sexualized way creates a block between the voyeuristic gaze of the camera, and by extension the audience. Trinity in the opening sequence, while wearing skin-tight black clothing, is not overly revealed to the camera (00:02:53). This is not to say, however, that there are no shots in which the Male Gaze is present. One clear point of subtle sexualization is when Trinity can be seen in soft focus in the background of the shot when the police officer is taking out his handcuff in the foreground (00:02:53). Though not the primary focus for the plot, the reflection of light on Trinity's pants serves to draw the attention of the viewer from the shadowy action of the officer's hand to the curve of her body from behind (00:02:54). The lack of skin showing does not entirely remove the sexualization of her character, but these shots are less prevalent than scenes such as the conversation between her and Neo at the club when the Wachowskis choose to deny the audience view of Trinity's body and instead focus on her face. The audience is frequently forced to acknowledge her character as a brilliant and active mind within the film. The focus on Trinity as a mind is also seen in the way she is dressed when seen on board the Nebuchadnezzar outside of the Matrix. Instead of the skintight clothing from before, Trinity wears loose and ragged clothing like everyone else aboard the ship (00:38:22). Outside of the voyeuristic world of the Matrix, Trinity is further denied to the audience as an object of visual pleasure.

Aboard the Nebuchadnezzar and seen within the Matrix on missions is the second most seen female character within the film. Where Trinity is a less traditionally "feminine" and more androgynous figure, Switch is a figure that pushes androgyny further and steps further outside of binary gender expectations. Introduced early in the film when Neo is being taken to meet Morpheus for the first time, Switch is an intimidating figure. Her introduction is centered around her role of protecting the rebels in the car from Neo who has been "bugged" by Agent Smith. Switch is seen turned backwards in her seat to hold a gun on Neo and threaten him when necessary (00:23:15-26). Where Trinity is presented as open and sympathetic as she attempts to convince Neo using

trust, Switch is shown to value the safety of the group above all and allows no argument from Neo (00:23:15-26). Unable to see much of Switch beyond her face, hands, and shoulders, the most striking elements are her hair, her gun, and the peek of her black blazer over the edge of the seat (00:22:56). Within the scene Switch's androgyny is a hard, and perhaps even masculine, contrast to the softness of Trinity and her interactions with Neo —especially as Switch prioritizes establishing authority to protect the group. Outside of the Matrix, Switch is seen in the same unisex, oversized, and ragged gray clothing as the other rebels, while her short white hair remains slightly longer than her virtual self-image (00:38:28). While these are the images of Switch that establish what little the audience knows about her as a side character, acceptance of the rebels of philosophers in search of truth makes Switch a figure much like the rest. Not signified by her body or even emotion, Switch values the concrete mission and is a figure aligned heavily with the mind in ways that a Western audience would easily recognize as stereotypical. Logical and unmoved by emotions that contradict what she needs to do, Switch is a transposed image of a masculine "mind" aligned character.

The presentation of these philosophical ideas by the Wachowskis is not merely the extension of a stylistic choice. It is proven that it would have been a simple task to create characters such as Trinity and Switch as highly sexualized objects on-screen and appropriately dressed to create maximum impact through the presentation of their foil, the woman in the red dress. The opposite of the characters who had been introduced so far, the woman in the red dress is coded to catch the eye and test how easily distracted the user is. Walking through the unassuming crowd toward Neo while Morpheus speaks is a blonde woman in a tight and revealing red dress (00:57:07). Everything about her brief screen time is designed to cater to the pleasure of the audience and creates her as an object of pleasure rather than an active participant in the meaning of the film. As she walks through the crowd toward Neo (through whose eyes the audience sees her) and the camera goes from a full-body shot to a mid-shot, the focus is increasingly on her breasts rather than her face (00:57:07-11). The smirk on her face indicates as she makes eye contact with the camera that she is not only aware of his gaze but was seeking it out (00:57:08-12). This is a deviation from the way other female characters are depicted in shots and thus it becomes clear that Neo (and the audience) viewing the woman in the red dress as a body to be looked at is the goal of the sequence. This point-of-view shot becomes a clear example of the male gaze as the focus goes from the push and shove of dozens of people to the woman's tight red dress and breasts

(00:56:55-57:11). She is a clear example of a woman "coded for strong visual and erotic impact" (Mulvey 62). She was coded to be a distracting object to be looked at that draws the eye to her as a means of training new members of the rebellion. The woman in the red dress was created to be an object of pleasure for the Male Gaze, a bearer of meanings she did not create (Mulvey 62).

The status of the woman in the red dress as an object of pleasure relegated only to the body is further compounded by statements made by characters in the rebellion that refer to women as bodies. One of the most obvious remarks is made by the character of Mouse after the women in the red dress simulation program is over. He offers Neo the chance to interact with the program again and leers that she (the woman in the red dress) "doesn't talk very much" but he could arrange a more personal meeting for him while Switch mocks him as a "digital pimp hard at work" (01:06:34-42). The presence of the woman in this training program serves as a direct foil to the presentation of the other female characters within the film and particularly within the human resistance. The woman in the red dress is presented above all as a body with a mind that was never needed and thus never created. It is by design that she functions as an object and "doesn't talk very much" (01:06:34-35) Another character that refers to women as bodies and objectifies them as objects of pleasure is Cypher. These are presented as casual comments by Cypher that do not draw attention in the same way that the comment by Mouse does. When Neo is still new on the ship and learning to understand the Matrix, he comes upon Cypher looking at the code on the screens. Cypher notes that he does not even see it as code anymore; it is just "blonde, brunette, redhead" (01:01:54). The comment is quickly lost in the conversation as Cypher offers Neo a drink and they talk about choosing to leave the Matrix construct. Despite its relatively impactful place in the conversation, the comment shows a casual objectification of whomever Cypher is watching on the screens. Given the fascination that Cypher has with Trinity and the heteronormative expectation of the 1990s, it is assumed that Cypher is speaking of women who he sees first as their visible traits from his place as the voyeur on the other side of the code. Given such comments by Mouse and Cypher, it was possible for female characters to be presented to the voyeuristic audience for pleasure, but it was a distinct and conscious choice in the creation and filming to present the female protagonists in line with the mind rather than the body.

Outside of the human resistance, there is one female character that is central to the film's plot and necessary to discuss the way women and the mind are connected. The character of the Oracle, though not long on screen, is one of the few characters that captivates the mind of the

audience as a central secondary character. Jason Haslam presents a critical interpretation of her character in "Coded Discourse: Romancing the (Electronic) Shadow in *The Matrix*" to argue that she is used to highlight Neo's lack of power and is heavily tied to the racist and sexist stereotype of the mammy figure. The Wachowskis created her as an exaggerated "all-knowing" and interfering figure to push the stereotype to the furthest possible point and so she became all-knowing and all-seeing in a very literal sense. Haslam notes "the Oracle appears to be more of a parody of the mammy stereotypes, and, as with Trinity, her support of Neo in effect shows his lack of power" (103). The unassuming introduction of the Oracle is deliberately chosen to contrast with the knowledge that she is shown to possess later. Haslam argues that his contrast is meant to highlight the ways in which Neo is being supported by characters who the Wachowskis use to break stereotypes. This argument can be extended, however, to include the contrast between how her introduction utilizes audience bias and expectation of the mammy stereotype to align her with the body compared to her power as a mind above all. Rather than reinforce the evoked essentialist notion of women as bodies and confined to meeting the bodily needs of others, the Oracle is shown to have power and autonomy through her knowledge and her mind. The ability that the Oracle possesses to speak prophecies and see into the future gives her abilities, associated with the mind, that are unparalleled even once Neo has become the One.

The build-up of the Oracle and her ability to tell the resistance whether or not Neo is the long-awaited "One" leads both the viewer and Neo to create a mental image of power and influence. To then move to a rundown residential building and an apartment full of children is a subversion of the environment expected for meeting such a powerful figure. Rather than a space of overt power and thus alignment with logic and the mind, Neo instead enters the realm of the domestic. The apartment of the Oracle is full of children known as "potentials' who are able to manipulate the Matrix (01:12:20). This domestic setting and the presence of children that the Oracle refers to as "my kids" evokes the maternal and the idea of women as defined by motherhood and reproduction, by ovaries and a uterus (01:13:20). The essentialist definition of women as mothers and defined by their bodies, as de Beauvoir discusses, is the image of the Oracle that is being depicted. The depiction is further complicated by the knowledge that though the children are "hers," the potentials are the children of others that she looks after, thereby evoking the racist mammy figure Haslam discusses (01:1). This is further reinforced by the image of the Oracle when Neo walks into the kitchen. An aging African American woman wearing an apron as she waits in front

of the oven is a deliberate attempt by the Wachowskis to create doubt in the claim of her power (01:12:33). This is not the expected introduction of the reverently discussed mind Morpheus had spoken of, and instead, it is aligned with the body through its lingering focus on food. This is the depiction of a "woman's place," the realm of the mammy figure, where bodily needs are met.

Where the on-screen depiction and introduction of the Oracle creates expectations of the body, it is the dialogue between Neo and the Oracle that subverts the image. When Neo enters the kitchen, the Oracle is facing the oven, though she makes it clear that she is aware not only of someone's presence, but she is aware of who is behind her without turning (01:12-37-38). Entire sections of the ensuing conversation occur while she is focused on the cookies rather than Neo. This is seen prominently when Neo breaks the vase near the door during their conversation:

> Neo: You're the Oracle?
>
> Oracle: Bingo. Not quite what you were expecting, right? [pause] Almost done. Smell good, don't they?
>
> Neo: Yeah.
>
> Oracle: I'd ask you to sit down but you aren't going to anyway. And don't worry about the vase.
>
> Neo: What vase? [Neo knocks a vase off the table, and it shatters]
>
> Oracle: *That* vase. (1:12:41-1:13:10)

Rather than a dramatic reveal of the impossible, the Oracle casually displays her knowledge to Neo. While speaking, she is taking the cookies out of the oven and placing them on the counter to cool. Due to this lack of attention paid to Neo, the predictions of the Oracle are given more credence. When she tells him what he is about to do (say no to sitting down and then break the vase) she has had very little contact with him (01:13:03-05). Without the necessary contact to observe him, it is clear that she is not watching him to predict what will happen but rather she is aware of what will happen without cues from him. The way she reveals her knowledge in combination with the cookies that are periodically spoken of or moved serves to create a slight dissonance between the gravity of what Neo is realizing and the more casual and unremarkable atmosphere of the apartment. For Neo, this interaction is momentous and confusing as he grapples with the idea that the woman before him is able to know his future and the intricacies of the Matrix. For the Oracle, this is not a life-changing experience. She is able to maintain a very casual tone for the conversation and it emphasizes the image of the Oracle not as a seeker of the truth, simply a

step ahead on Neo's path, but instead, an individual who already knows the truth. She is a character that, though central to the human rebellion, is not an active figure for the rest of the film. Instead, the Oracle tells each person what they need to know and allows them to take their own journey from that point on whether they believe her or not.

While Neo is the most obvious character to see the implications of the Oracle's knowledge later in the story, he is not the only one. Throughout discussions of the Oracle, Trinity is secretive about what she was told during her visit. It is only revealed when Neo is dying in the Matrix that the Oracle told Trinity that she would fall in love with the One. This confession scene, complete with a fairytale kiss that seems to bring Neo back to life, has been read multiple ways by critics. There are two readings of the scene that, though they appear to contradict each other, combine in ways that support the scene as a subversion of women as defined by the body. In *Alien Constructions,* Patricia Melzer notes that the ability of Trinity to revive Neo without the use of technology emphasizes human emotion pushing Neo's place as the One further "while Trinity's regenerative abilities reposition her as a woman and a potential mother," (160). Melzer's argument that she is repositioned in this scene as "a potential mother" alludes to women as bringers of life in a very concrete and bodily way (160). This scene, outside of bringing the expected heterosexual romance to the forefront of the plot, becomes an image of a woman giving birth and bringing Neo back to life no longer a mere rebel but as the savior. In contrast to Melzer's reading of the scene as a bodily alignment of Trinity, G. Christopher Williams in "Mastering the Real: Trinity as the 'Real' Hero of *The Matrix"* read this scene as an expression of Trinity's power over reality. Williams argues that Trinity's confession and kiss as an act of subverting expectations through her power. They go on to explain, "The heroine of the story leans down to kiss the "prince," rather than vice versa, and in doing so is capable of something far beyond what Neo was capable of doing; she masters not merely the simulation but the real itself" (14-15). Trinity's mastery of the "real" is catalyzed by the death of Neo and her realization that she loves him. As the Oracle had previously told her she would fall in love with the One, it is her belief in this prophecy that allows her to "obliviate the very real death of Neo" and enforce her will on reality (14). Williams's argument that Trinity is enforcing her own will upon reality in this scene would further analyze Trinity as a character aligned with the mind, as this is an act of her unwavering belief and knowledge that Neo simply cannot be dead. These two different readings of the scene appear

contradictory in their conclusions about her actions and their ramifications. However, this is only the case when insisting upon a singular reading of the film.

Melzer's argument that Neo's resurrection reinforces Trinity as a potential mother, as a bringer of life, is not an incorrect interpretation of the scene's implications, nor is Williams incorrect in reading it as a revelation of Trinity's power over reality. I argue that the Wachowskis use this scene to argue for a subversion of the relegation of women to the body. The emphasis on Trinity bringing life back to Neo can be read as a clear reference to birth and rebirth which could very easily be aligned with the body, and, as Melzer argues for, a reinforcement of Trinity as a body. Through the choice to use her for this scene, the Wachowskis are deliberately evoking a woman as the bringer of life. It is not Morpheus in his unending belief that Neo is the One that is able to miraculously jump start a heart (02:04:31-49). Instead, amidst the flying sparks and deadly lasers cutting through the ship, it is Trinity that gets through to Neo and calmly informs him that he cannot be dead (02:04:15-16). Throughout this scene the closeup shots of Trinity and Neo allow the background to fade out of focus and the diegetic sounds of destruction to lower (02:04:00). Rather than continuing to amplify these sounds to increase the desperation and tension of the scene, the volume is lowered to create distance between the characters and the world around them. In doing so the Wachowskis create a sense that reality ceases its sovereignty over the pair, and it is Trinity and her will that shape the outcome. While Neo lies dead, it is not this tragedy that is focused on by the closeups. As was discussed in relation to other closeups such as those of Trinity in the club, these shots where the Wachowskis allow the world around her to fall away as she speaks with Neo force the audience to focus on her as a mind. There is no sense of bodily constraints or action as Trinity speaks with Neo's corpse (02:04:00-49). Logically, Neo cannot hear her any more than she should be able to speak life back into him, but these are facts that fall away under the force of her mind just as the impossible feats within the Matrix cave under Neo's knowledge. Throughout this scene, the closeups not only push the audience to see Trinity as a mind and empathize with what she is experiencing, but it highlights her as more than a passive object. These closeups create a connection between her and the audience that is humanizing without implying she is overcome by emotions that negate the earlier development of her character as led by her knowledge of truth and reality.

Ultimately the Wachowskis utilize female characters in *The Matrix* as a means of subverting essentialist ideas of gender in its philosophical foundation. In philosophical discussions

of the mind and body, women are often pushed aside as intrinsically and inescapably connected to the body as a mirror to the cultural assumption of men as minds. The Wachowskis utilize this cultural binary by evoking elements such as the male philosopher prominently in characters such as Neo while also subverting it through the female philosophers. In a film centered around the issues of the mind and the body, it is a deliberate choice for characters such as Trinity, the Oracle, and Switch to not be locked within their subjectivity as de Beauvoir writes, nor presented as passive objects of pleasure for the voyeuristic camera. Instead, as active and crucial participants in the plot and journey for truth, female characters are shown to be heavily defined and relied upon for the power of their minds and their knowledge of the truth in the fight against the simulation that seeks to stop them. Ultimately, the Wachowskis step outside of the Matrix of foundational Western philosophy and question the reality of these essentialist philosophical norms.

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British War Poets and the Gendered Trauma of World War I

Landon Simmons

At Craiglockhart Military Hospital outside of Edinburgh, two young poets, fresh from the trenches of the Great War, find themselves admitted for the treatment of their shell-shock.[139] The two men, Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen, bond over their shared trauma and poetic interests, and form a sort of mentor-pupil relationship.[140] Through their haunting and grotesque prose, they express almost unimaginable horrors. "To grunt and wriggle: none heeded him," Sassoon writes of a soldier choking on his own blood, "Down, and down, and down, he sank and drowned."[141] "In all my dreams before my helpless sight," Owen recollects of a victim of a gas attack, "he plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning."[142] Their excursion to Craiglockhart, however, does not protect the two poets from witnessing such brutality again—both men return to the front in France, and Owen is killed just a week before the war's armistice.[143]

The wartime horrors experienced by Sassoon and Owen are mirrored by too many soldiers to count. Shell shock was rampant in the war, and as a diagnosis that was used to cover a vast assortment of symptoms both physical and psychological, it meant many different things for many different soldiers.[144] Regardless of the exact variety of trauma such soldiers experienced, almost all were unified in the difficulties they faced when returning home.[145] In Great Britain in particular, shell-shocked troops seeking assistance struggled with the massive and disinterested bureaucracy of the Ministry of Pensions, which was stringent in its determination of qualifying aid-receivers.[146] Furthermore, shell-shocked soldiers were frequently ostracized from society, and their diagnoses

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[139] John Carey, "Poetry of the First World War," in *A Little History of Poetry* (Yale University Press, 2020), 200-201.
[140] Carey, "The Poetry of the First World War," 201.
[141] Sassoon, "Counter-Attack," Poetry Foundation, accessed October 7, 2021, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57220/counter-attack.
[142] Wilfred Owen, "Dulce et Decorum Est," Poetry Foundation, accessed October 7, 2021, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46560/dulce-et-decorum-est.
[143] Carey, "The Poetry of the First World War," 201.
[144] Tracey Loughran, "Shell Shock, Trauma, and the First World War: The Making of a Diagnosis and its Histories," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* Vol. 67, No. 1 (Oxford University Press, 2012), 101-102.
[145] Peter Leese, "Problems Returning Home: The British Psychological Casualties of the Great War," *The Historical Journal* Vol. 40, No. 4, (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1055.
[146] Leese, "Problems Returning Home," 1055.

were conflated with a notion that they suffered from feminine, hysterical cowardice and had failed to live up to the ideals of manhood.[147] The trauma of shell shock, thus, was often inflicted on both the battlefield and at home.

When discussing matters of shell shock, historians often tend to examine the treatment of its victims by society. For some, this means examining the failures of government programs in securing sorely-needed benefits for these soldiers, or the shortcomings of psychiatric treatments of the time.[148] For others, it means analyzing the nature of public opinion regarding shell-shocked individuals as people struggled to better understand the condition.[149] Some historians go even further and study how such treatment varied between countries and ethnic groups.[150] A great number of all these historians emphasize, to various degrees, the presence of underlying misogyny in the early 20th century's conceptions of shell-shock.

These approaches, while necessary and important, often miss the nuances of soldiers' personal experiences with trauma. Such efforts have instead tended to fall into the realm of literary studies, as there exists a broad range of poetry and other literature, written by veterans of the war, which directly concern these themes.[151] As Tracey Loughran describes, there exists a tension between "the conventionally historical desire to find out what happened and why" and the drive of literary critics "to capture and convey the emotional tenor of an experience."[152] Both approaches, however, are unified in their efforts to determine truths about the nature of shell-shock, and it is in the spirit of conjoining the two perspectives that this essay sets out. Through examining the verse and prose of British war poets, this essay seeks to gauge both the historic and personal nature of

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[147] George L. Mosse, "Shell-Shock as a Social Disease," *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 35, No. 1, Special Issue: Shell-Shock (Sage Publications, Inc., 2000), 101-108.

[148] Leese, "Problems Returning Home," 1055-1067; Irinia Sirotkina. "The Politics of Etiology: Shell Shock in the Russian Army, 1914-1918," *Madness and the Mad in Russian Culture*, eds. Angela Britlinger and Ilya Vintisky (University of Toronto Press, 2007), 117-129.

[149] Mosse, "Shell-Shock as a Social Disease," 101-108; Annessa C. Stagner, "Healing the Soldier, Restoring the Nation: Representations of Shell Shock in the USA During and After the First World War," *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 49, No. 2 (Sage Publications, Inc., 2014), 255-274.

[150] Joanna Bourke, "Effeminacy, Ethnicity and the End of Trauma: The Sufferings of 'Shell-Shocked' Men in Great Britain and Ireland, 1914-39," *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 35, No. 1, Special Issue: Shell-Shock (Sage Publications, Inc., 2000), 57-69; Fiona Reid and Christine Van Everbroeck, "Shell Shock and the Kloppe: war neuroses amongst British and Belgian troops during and after the First World War," *Medicine, Conflict and Survival* Vol. 30, No. 4, Special Issue: World War One (Taylor & Francis, Ltd., 2014), 252-275.

[151] Loughran, "Shell Shock, Trauma, and the First World War," 95-96.

[152] Loughran, "Shell Shock, Trauma, and the First World War," 96.

shell shock and psychological trauma inflicted by the violence of the First World War, with particular attention being given to the gendered aspects of such conditions.

These parameters provide a unique yet telling understanding of experiences with the trauma of war. Poetry has been selected as the sole form of primary source material because of its aptitude for detailed description and willingness to engage with issues as heavy as trauma—a topic not so commonly touched upon in letters back home. The focus on Britain is largely a matter of a conveniently shared language with the author of this essay, though due to cultural differences in the response to shell shock and trauma, it is also prudent to restrict one's lens to a sole country. Finally, the emphasis on the gendered component of this trauma serves as a necessary throughline for a series of poems that, while thematically in the same vein, are largely multifaceted in their depictions.

Taking the literary approach of examining the poetry of the Great War's trauma provides historians with an intimate perspective of the era that is oftentimes overlooked, yet just as valid as others. Furthermore, analyzing this trauma through the lens of its gendered implications sheds considerable light not only upon the subtlety with which misogyny often operates but also upon the stigma men have traditionally faced in matters of mental health. It illuminates the ways in which psychological trauma is compounded by misogyny as well as demonstrates how a prejudice against femininity harmfully polices masculinity. Studying the relationship between representations of gender and trauma in war poetry can shine a light upon the interrelatedness of these two subjects in a vast range of other areas.

Following Archduke Franz Ferdinand's fatal shooting on June 28, 1914, Europe and much of the rest of the world was thrust into a conflict of unmatched proportions and brutality.[153] The magnitude of this First World War was exacerbated largely by the increasingly industrialized nature of modernity, with significant advancements in technology allowing for both the rapid mobilization of forces and the development of military weaponry that was more accurate, fast-firing, and deadly than ever.[154] It was in the context of such conditions that the war produced a

[153] Samuel R. Williamson, "The Origins of World War I," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* Vol. 18, No. 4, (The MIT Press, 1988), 795.
[154] Michael Eliot Howard, *The First World War: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2007), https://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/ZTAwMHhuYV9fMTkyMTM4X19BTg2?sid=f73289b2-19ee-45b7-98f5-d72b7a5b7cb9@sessionmgr4006&vid=3&format=EB&lpid=lp_1&rid=0, 16-17.

total of approximately 40 million military and civilian casualties.[155] While the unprecedented body counts were catastrophic, they often overshadowed the psychological torments of those who found they had survived this global conflict.[156]

In the trenches of the Great War brewed a strange and concerning phenomenon amongst troops, uncharacteristic of the experiences of soldiers in wars past.[157] Many troops were observed as exhibiting, as Fiona Reid and Christine Van Everbroeck put it, "a range of anxiety disorders — mental tics, nightmares, confusion, fatigue, obsessive thoughts, inexplicable aches and pains," as well as "functional disorders such as mutism, paralysis, hysterical blindness and hysterical deafness."[158] It was noticed that these odd symptoms often took hold following soldiers' exposure to nearby exploding shells, which gradually led to said soldiers being referred to as having been "shell-shocked."[159] Approximately 80,000 British soldiers were treated for the neuroses and physical ailments associated with this broad descriptor.[160]

While modern conceptions differ from the understanding of shell shock at the time, the condition is often regarded as a definitory precursor to post-traumatic stress disorder.[161] This may not be entirely accurate, as there were many cases of shell shock that would not fall under the same diagnostic criteria as PTSD, yet the core experiences associated with both are emblematic of an underlying trauma.[162] While the exact nature of this trauma may not have been fully understood at the time, its existence was recognized.[163] Yet, in spite of this fact and in spite of the overwhelming number of those who suffered from war neuroses, traumatized soldiers were often the recipients of lackluster treatment.[164] This treatment fell short on levels both medical and societal, with doctors often advising shell-shocked patients to "banish all thoughts of war from their minds" and

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[155] "World War I Casualties - Centre-Robert-Schuman.org," accessed November 13, 2021, http://www.centre-robert-schuman.org/userfiles/files/REPERES%20%E2%80%93%20module%201-1-1%20-%20explanatory%20notes%20%E2%80%93%20World%20War%20I%20casualties%20%E2%80%93%20EN.pdf, 1.

[156] Leese, "Problems Returning Home," 1055.

[157] Reid and Everbroeck, "Shell Shock and the Kloppe," 252.

[158] Reid and Everbroeck, "Shell Shock and the Kloppe," 253.

[159] Reid and Everbroeck, "Shell Shock and the Kloppe," 252.

[160] Reid and Everbroeck, "Shell Shock and the Kloppe," 253-254.

[161] Loughran, "Shell Shock, Trauma, and the First World War," 94.

[162] Loughran, "Shell Shock, Trauma, and the First World War," 102-104.

[163] W.H.R. Rivers, "An Address on the Repression of War Experience," *The Lancet* Vol. 191, No. 4927 (1918), 173.

[164] Rivers, "An Address on the Repression of War Experience," 173; Leese, "Problems Returning Home," 1055-1059.

to instead focus on "beautiful scenery," and with the British government not opting to provide military pensions to shell-shocked veterans as readily as it granted them to more obviously-wounded ones.[165]

Underlying all of this treatment, furthermore, was an unyielding dismissal of shell shock's severity. Shell shock, due to the emotional and mental breakdowns it so often induced, became largely conflated with a feminine "hysteria."[166] In the eyes of much of the British public, the condition was no serious disease, but rather a failure on the part of the afflicted to live up to the expected ideals of masculinity.[167] One Lieutenant Colonel Hurst, presiding officer over the Seale Hayne Military Hospital, is quoted as saying in a 1919 lecture, "There is no such disease as 'shell-shock.' It is simply a polite way of saying 'hysteria.' … It is merely a perpetuation of the natural results of intense fear, and there should be no such thing as pensions for men suffering from shell-shock."[168] One 1919 newspaper article, entitled "Shell-Shock or Shell-Shy?," purported that the condition could be chalked up to "abnormal reactions to ordinary stimuli," and praised "the stamina of the officers and men" that had not fallen victim.[169] Another 1920 article raised the question of whether or not soldiers who claimed to be shell-shocked ought to be put to death for cowardice.[170]

Shell-shocked men were cast not only as effeminate, stamina-deficient abnormalities but as a threat to Britain itself.[171] The heroes of the war were lauded as beacons of masculinity, possessing the physical and mental fortitude to ensure the longevity and victory of the British nation.[172] The contrasting emergence of the shell-shocked soldier with this ideal prompted many Britons to fear for both the war effort and the fabric of their nation.[173] "Shattered nerves and lack

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[165] Rivers, "An Address on the Repression of War Experience," 173; Leese, "Problems Returning Home," 1055-1059.
[166] Mosse, "shell shock as a Social Disease," 102.
[167] Mosse, "shell shock as a Social Disease," 101-102.
[168] "Shell-Shock or Hysteria? Investigations In a War Hospital.," *Yorkshire Evening Post*, February 11, 1919. https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000273/19190211/123/0008.
[169] "Shell-Shock or Shell-Shy?," *Yorkshire Evening Post*, April 9, 1919. https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000273/19190409/160/0006
[170] "Shell-Shock or Cowardice," *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, February 20, 1919. https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000669/19200220/143/0005
[171] Mosse, "shell shock as a Social Disease," 102-103.
[172] Elaine Showalter, "Male Hysteria." In *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980.* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 169.
[173] Mosse, "shell shock as a Social Disease," 103-104.

of will-power were the enemies of a settled society," writes George Mosse, "and because men so afflicted were thought to be effeminate, they endangered the clear distinction between genders which was generally regarded as an essential cement of society."[174] With this conception of shell shock came the association of the condition with social groups already considered prone to malingering or hysterics, such as Irishmen, lowland Scots, and homosexuals.[175] Trauma had become a stigmatized threat to masculinity that was perceived as essential to Britain's survival.

Literature, prior to the war and early into its conception, played a significant role in shaping and reinforcing this image of masculinity.[176] As Elaine Showalter writes, "This image was prepared by the boy's books of G.[A]. Henty, by Rider Haggard's male adventure stories, [and] by the romantic military poems of Tennyson and Robert Bridges."[177] Within this cultural context, it should perhaps come as little surprise that a great many Britons "...rejoiced at the outbreak of the war."[178] To Paul Fussell, this is one of the First World War's greatest ironies—that so many young soldiers should march so brazenly and joyfully into it whilst being so innocently unaware of the grim horrors it would entail.[179] Fussell notes that for generations, readers had been exposed to language which lauded "the quiet action of personal control and Christian self-abnegation ('sacrifice')" and glorified "more violent actions of aggression and defense."[180] In this lies another irony—that in encouraging the violent conditions from which shell shock would result, this preexisting literary culture would also espouse the virtue of "personal control" which shell-shocked soldiers were deemed as lacking.

A great deal of these masculine ideals are mirrored in the early-war sonnets of Rupert Brooke. Consider the first stanza of his poem entitled "Peace":

> Now, God be thanked Who has matched us with His hour,
> And caught our youth, and wakened us from sleeping,
> With hand made sure, clear eye, and sharpened power,
> To turn, as swimmers into cleanness leaping,

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[174] Mosse, "shell shock as a Social Disease," 103.
[175] Mosse, "shell shock as a Social Disease," 103.
[176] Showalter, "Male Hysteria," 169; Carey, "Poetry of the First World War," 200.
[177] Showalter, "Male Hysteria," 169.
[178] Carey, "Poetry of the First World War," 200.
[179] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 19-22.
[180] Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 22.

Glad from a world grown old and cold and weary,
Leave the sick hearts that honour could not move,
And half-men, and their dirty songs and dreary,
And all the little emptiness of love![181]

The war is depicted here as not only a trial ordained by God Himself but one that soldiers ought to thank Him for. Brooke says the war has "wakened us from sleeping," and describes it as an opportunity for men to finally prove themselves in "a world grown old and cold and weary" with peace. To him, it is a war for the supposedly healthy hearts which are compelled by the attainment of honor and "half-men" need not bother. To be one of these "half-men" is to be "sick," to sing "dreary" and "dirty songs," and to be overly concerned with the "little emptiness of love." To Brooke, this is a war for men to prove that they are men.

While committing to fight in the war is regarded as a good first step in this pursuit of proving, or acquiring, one's masculinity, nothing is more emblematic of this honor to Brooke than for one to die. This is especially demonstrated in the first of his two sonnets entitled "The Dead":

Blow out, you bugles, over the rich Dead!
There's none of these so lonely and poor of old,
But, dying, has made us rarer gifts than gold.
These laid the world away; poured out the red
Sweet wine of youth; gave up the years to be
Of work and joy, and that unhoped serene,
That men call age; and those who would have been,
Their sons, they gave, their immortality.[182]

The dead of the war, despite having perished so prematurely, are seen as being enriched by death, which has "made [them] rarer gifts than gold." Furthermore, this ultimate act of sacrifice is glamorized by the celebratory tone of the poem with its call for the blowing out of bugles and its reference to the spilled blood as, "the red Sweet wine of youth." This is not to say that the poem lacks solemnity, as it frequently emphasizes the fact that the dead will never see the "unhoped

[181] Rupert Brooke, "Peace," Poetry Foundation, accessed on November 18, 2021, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/13074/peace.
[182] Rupert Brooke, "The Dead," Poetry Foundation, accessed on November 20, 2021, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/13075/the-dead.

serene" old age. Brooke himself would be among those youthful dead, killed by a blood infection following a mosquito bite in 1915.[183]

Few soldier-poets rejoiced so enthusiastically about the onset of the Great War as Julian Grenfell, whose poetry also perpetuated hyper-masculine notions of the glory of war. "I adore war," he once wrote in a letter home from France, "It is like a big picnic without the objectlessness of a picnic. I've never been so well or so happy."[184] This attitude is especially reflected in his most famous poem, "Into Battle," from which the following stanza comes:

> The fighting man shall from the sun
> Take warmth, and life from glowing earth;
> Speed with the light-foot winds to run
> And with the trees to newer birth;
> And find, when fighting shall be done,
> Great rest, and fulness after dearth.[185]

Here Grenfell paints an image of a soldier in combat being aided by nature itself, gaining warmth from the sun, life from the earth, and speed from the winds. It's a picturesque, graceful scene which implies that war is just as natural as any of these other things, even occurring in harmony with them. Trees become a metaphor for the rebirth of this "fighting man," who finds, "when fighting shall be done / Great rest, and fulness after dearth." War is a fulfilling endeavor to Grenfell, one in which the prior burdens of one's soul are alleviated.

Throughout the poem, various aspects of nature continue to embolden the soldier's spirit.[186] A kestrel and little owls "Bid him be swift and keen as they," a blackbird urges him to "Sing well, for [he] may not sing another," and a horse reminds him of the "nobler powers" of "patient eyes [and] courageous hearts."[187] Finally, the time for battle arrives:

> And when the burning moment breaks,

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[183] Rennie Parker, "Rupert Brooke: 'Come and Die. It'll Be Great Fun,'" in *The Georgian Poets: Abercrombie, Brooke, Drinkwater, Lascelles, Thomas*, (Liverpool University Press: 1999), 65; Alisa Miller, *Rupert Brooke in the First World War*, (Liverpool University Press: 2017), 1.

[184] Carey, "Poetry of the First World War," 200; Edgar Jones, "The Psychology of Killing: The Combat Experience of British Soldiers in the First World War," *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 41, No. 2 (Sage Publications, Inc.: 2006), 233.

[185] Julian Grenfell, "Into Battle," Poetry Foundation, accessed on November 20, 2021, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47261/into-battle.

[186] Grenfell, "Into Battle."

[187] Grenfell, "Into Battle."

And all things else are out of mind,
And only joy of battle takes
Him by the throat and makes him blind,
Through joy and blindness he shall know,
Not caring much to know, that still
Nor lead nor steel shall reach him, so
That it be not the Destined Will.[188]

Not only is war natural and fulfilling to Grenfell—it is *joyful*. This joy is pure, "all things else are out of mind." It is described in a way that suggests it overtakes the soldier's sense of autonomy, "[taking] / Him by the throat and [making] him blind." The blinding joy of battle convinces the soldier that he is invincible, that it is his "Destined Will" to survive. But even this is something that he does not "[care] much to know," as the overwhelming joy of it all is so great that thoughts of his own mortality seem to scarcely cross the soldier's mind. Such joy unfortunately did not prove as enduring for Grenfell himself. He was killed in May of 1915.[189]

While the fanatically militant views expressed by Brooke and Grenfell were at first widely popular amongst British soldiers, it was not long before soldiers' poetry began to reflect a stark shift in attitude. After 20-year-old Charles Sorley Hamilton was shot and killed by a sniper at Loos in October of 1915, a manuscript for his poem "When You See Millions of the Mouthless Dead" was found amongst his belongings.[190] Of these "mouthless dead," Sorley has this to say:

Give them not praise. For, deaf, how should they know
It is not curses heaped on each gashed head?
Nor tears. Their blind eyes see not your tears flow.
Nor honour. It is easy to be dead.
Say only this, "They are dead." Then add thereto,
"Yet many a better one has died before."[191]

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[188] Grenfell, "Into Battle."
[189] Carey, "Poetry of the First World War," 200.
[190] Elizabeth Vandiver, "'Millions of the Mouthless Dead': Charles Sorley and Wilfred Owen in Homer's Hades," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 5, no. 3 (1999), 436.
[191] Charles Hamilton Sorley, "When You See Millions of the Mouthless Dead," Poetry Foundation, accessed October 7, 2021, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47427/when-you-see-millions-of-the-mouthless-dead.

Directly opposing Brooke's and Grenfell's hypermasculine notions of honor is Sorley's command to not bother giving the dead praise or tears, for what good would it do them? "It is easy to be dead," he wryly remarks, adding that "many a better one has died before." In Sorley's poem, the previous notion of war as a testing grounds for men to prove their worth and earn their honor is entirely reversed, and it instead indicates that it would be more honorable for one to die outside of battle (or at least outside of this particular war).

The poem, however, proves to be much more nuanced than being a mere rebuttal to the commonly held conceptions of the Great War. Sorley proceeds to conclude the piece with a profoundly somber declaration:

> Then, scanning all the o'ercrowded mass, should you
> Perceive one face that you loved heretofore,
> It is a spook. None wears the face you knew.
> Great death has made all his for evermore.[192]

While Sorley's personification of death as a masculine entity is likely just the product of linguistic custom, it still reflects the gendered conflation of violence with manhood. More interesting though is the discussion of the "one face that you loved heretofore" that is now "a spook," no longer "the face you knew." Love might initially seem an odd emotion to evoke in discussions of war, yet many soldiers would undoubtedly find it fitting when considered within the context of the intense homosocial bonding that occurred in the trenches.[193] "In the official dogma of the war," writes Sarah Cole, "comradeship was meant to sustain the soldier, to provide the possibility of heroic action, to redeem the horrific suffering that the war endlessly inflicted."[194] The "tragic paradox" of the war, as Cole puts it, is its unrelenting propensity for destroying this very friendship.[195]

Often, poetic expressions of this wartime friendship would border on (and sometimes actually be) proclamations of romantic desire. One of the most telling examples of this trend is Ivor Gurney's "To His Love," believed to be written in early 1918.[196] The first stanza of the poem addressed to the female lover of a recently deceased soldier, is a rather straightforward, albeit

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[192] Sorley, "When You See Millions of the Mouthless Dead."
[193] Sarah Cole, "Modernism, Male Intimacy, and the Great War," *ELH* 68, no. 2 (2001), 469-470.
[194] Cole, "Modernism, Male Intimacy, and the Great War," 470.
[195] Cole, "Modernism, Male Intimacy, and the Great War," 470.
[196] John Lucas, *Ivor Gurney*, (Liverpool University Press, 2001), 29.

touching, the lament of the narrator's loss.[197] Gurney invokes romantic imagery of strolls with his lost comrade across the peaceful, sheep-dotted greenery of Cotswold.[198] He speaks of dashed hopes for the relationship between him and the soldier that "Are now useless indeed."[199] He continues in the second stanza:

> His body that was so quick
> Is not as you
> Knew it, on Severn river
> Under the blue
> Driving our small boat through.[200]

The tone Gurney expresses here is almost one of possessive jealousy. The narrator's experience of the dead soldier's body is indicated to be more intimate than the experience his female beloved at home could have had with him, though it is ambiguous as to whether this intimacy is the result of the two men's affections for each other, the brutality of the subject's death, or both. The ambiguity of this sentiment is furthered when the narrator invokes the image of "that red wet / Thing I must somehow forget."[201]

There appears to be no explicit evidence of Gurney's sexual preferences, though currents of homoeroticism run strongly not only through his writings but through the poetry of the war as a whole.[202] A surprising number of the war's most renowned poets, including the aforementioned Brooke, Sassoon, and Owen, were gay or bisexual, and their letters and poetry frequently reflected this.[203] Homoeroticism, for reasons not entirely understood, has become somewhat of a hallmark of the First World War's poetry and is a feature that stands in almost paradoxical contrast to the time's prevailing negative connotations of homosexuality.[204] And while an inherent link is not at all evident between homosexuality and shell shock, it is an interesting and unfortunate fact that

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[197] Ivor Gurney, "To His Love," Poetry Foundation, accessed October 7, 2021, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57246/to-his-love.
[198] Gurney, "To His Love."
[199] Gurney, "To His Love."
[200] Gurney, "To His Love."
[201] Gurney, "To His Love."
[202] Lucas, *Ivor Gurney*, 1; Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 293-335.
[203] Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory,* 327; Miller, *Rupert Brooke in the First World War*, 14; James S. Campbell, "'For You May Touch Them Not': Misogyny, Homosexuality, and the Ethics of Passivity in First World War Poetry," *ELH* 64, no. 3 (1997), 823-42.
[204] Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 303-304.

many of the war's most renowned queer poets (including Sassoon, Owen, and Robert Graves) were admitted to psychiatric wards for the treatment of shell shock (with these three actually undergoing treatment simultaneously at Craiglockhart).[205] Gurney himself was also diagnosed with shell shock in 1918, and would spend the last fifteen years of his life in various asylums after attempting suicide in 1922 and being declared insane.[206]

It is in the poetry of Sassoon and Owen that gendered conceptions of the war's trauma are depicted most powerfully. The perspectives they offer are perhaps the result of their position on the fringes of societal norms, placed there by the intersection of their experiences with homosexuality and shell shock. It was while undergoing treatment for shell shock at Craiglockhart in 1917 that the two poets composed some of their most highly-regarded works, including Owen's "Dulce Et Decorum Est."[207] The first stanza alone stands in stark contrast to the romanticized works of such poets as Brooke and Grenfell:

> Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
> Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
> Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs,
> And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
> Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,
> But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
> Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
> Of gas-shells dropping softly behind.[208]

These soldiers, far from embodying the ideal of hypermasculine heroics so often lauded in the war, are likened to "old beggars" and "hags." Owen's language describes no hearty, stalwart beacons of nobility, but sick, emaciated men who lamely limp forward and are in so debilitated a condition that they do not even notice the gas shells which fall behind them until it is too late.

The poem's second stanza describes the weary soldiers' delayed reaction to this surprise attack.[209] They entirely betray the image of the brave, well-composed soldiers that had previously

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[205] Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 313-314.
[206] Lucas, *Ivor Gurney*, xii-xiii.
[207] Paul Norgate, "Wilfred Owen and the Soldier Poets," *The Review of English Studies* 40, no. 160 (1989), p. 516-530.
[208] Owen, "Dulce Et Decorum Est."
[209] Owen, "Dulce Et Decorum Est."

been so often patriotically glorified, but are described as "fumbling" and "stumbling" as they frantically struggle to put their "clumsy" gas masks on.[210] Much of the remainder of the poem is dedicated to detailing the horrifying visage of a soldier who fails to get his mask on in time and plunges at the narrator whilst slowly drowning in the frothy blood of his own lungs.[211] Following this dramatic scene, Owen ends the poem with a direct condemnation of the traditional, nationalistic narrative of the war:

> My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
> To children ardent for some desperate glory,
> The old Lie: *Dulce et decorum est*
> *Pro patria mori.*[212]

This old adage, "It is sweet and fitting to die for one's country," is a lie, Owen says. It is told to and believed not by grown men who know better, but "To children ardent for some desperate glory." They are not glorified by war, not made into men, but are only further emasculated by it.

Owen's poem "Disabled," also written during the stay at Craiglockhart, deals more directly with the ramifications of suffering from war-inflicted wounds, describing the specific experiences of a soldier who has returned home after losing his legs.[213] Much of the poem reflects the themes expressed in "Dulce Et Decorum Est," consisting of ruminations on the aforementioned "lie" of the war and what it means to be a shadow of not only who one used to be, but what one could have been.[214] The poem's most profound stanza is its final one:

> Now, he will spend a few sick years in institutes,
> And do what things the rules consider wise,
> And take whatever pity they may dole.
> Tonight he noticed how the women's eyes
> Passed from him to the strong men that were whole.
> How cold and late it is! Why don't they come
> And put him into bed? Why don't they come?

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[210] Owen, "Dulce Et Decorum Est."
[211] Owen, "Dulce Et Decorum Est."
[212] Owen, "Dulce Et Decorum Est."
[213] Wilfred Owen, "Disabled," Poetry Foundation, accessed December 16, 2021, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57285/disabled.
[214] Owen, "Disabled."

Owen effectively draws upon his own experiences within a psychiatric institution to create a character with who disabled soldiers more broadly can connect and resonate. A deep discontent is expressed regarding the treatment provided in these facilities, with their instructions "the rules consider wise" and superficial pity. Yet the most troubling aspect of all to the soldier is the emasculation he has suffered, reflected in the description of "how the women's eyes / Passed from him to the strong men that were whole." The war, again, is demonstrated by Owen to be a force that does the opposite of what the likes of Brooke and Grenfell promised: stripping one of their masculinity rather than granting it.

Sassoon's own poetry often strongly mirrors Owen's (or vice versa), both in aesthetic content and in the messages which are expressed. Sassoon's "Counter-Attack," for example, is strongly similar to "Dulce Et Decorum Est" in that it is also a poem in which soldiers are described without any romanticized lens, and are woefully unprepared for an attack which results in their brutal defeat.[215] The poem's second stanza, however, is unique in that it describes the experience of a soldier as he is shell-shocked:

> Mute in the clamour of shells he watched them burst
> Spouting dark earth and wire with gusts from hell,
> While posturing giants dissolved in drifts of smoke.
> He crouched and flinched, dizzy with galloping fear,
> Sick for escape,—loathing the strangled horror
> And butchered, frantic gestures of the dead.[216]

The language used to describe the soldier, "dizzy with galloping fear" and "sick for escape," is reminiscent of the emasculating rhetoric used in Owen's counterpart, and essentially serves the same function. However, there is more to this depiction which is subtle yet extremely significant—this frantic, hysterical state of shock which the soldier finds himself in is clearly *inflicted*, and this subverts the prevailing notion that shell-shocked soldiers suffer from the ailment due to something inherent within their character. Sassoon horrifies the reader with vividly gruesome descriptions of the dead in the poem's first stanza, then cites these dead and their "butchered, frantic gestures" to invoke a sense of why the soldier acts as he does.

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[215] Sassoon, "Counter-Attack."
[216] Sassoon, "Counter-Attack."

If “Dulce Et Decorum Est” is the companion to “Counter-Attack,” then “Disabled” can be considered the companion to Sassoon’s “Repression of War Experience.” The poem is arguably the most intimate examination of shell shock that has come from the British poetic canon, and interestingly enough shares the title of a report written by Dr. W.H.R. Rivers, who treated Sassoon at Craiglockhart.[217] It begins, like “Disabled,” with a description of a soldier readjusting after returning home:

> Now light the candles; one; two; there's a moth;
> What silly beggars they are to blunder in
> And scorch their wings with glory, liquid flame—
> No, no, not that,—it's bad to think of war,
> When thoughts you've gagged all day come back to scare you;
> And it's been proved that soldiers don't go mad
> Unless they lose control of ugly thoughts
> That drive them out to jabber among the trees.[218]

Sassoon’s use of stream of consciousness invites the reader to examine shell shock from the point of view of a soldier actively suffering from it. It is clear the narrator has been given the instruction, popularly given by psychiatrists who treated shell shock, to expel all thought of war from mind. It is also clear that this effort is not going well—a moth flying into a candle triggers a memory of liquid flame (a flamethrower), and the narrator quickly attempts to force this unwanted thought from the mind. He is convinced that if he can just keep those “ugly thoughts” contained, he can retain his sanity.

This troubled effort on behalf of the narrator to control his thoughts continues throughout the poem as he goes about attempting everyday activities such as lighting a pipe and reading a book. This mission, however, ultimately proves to be doomed to fail:

> You're quiet and peaceful, summering safe at home;
> You'd never think there was a bloody war on! ...
> O yes, you would ... why, you can hear the guns.

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[217] Rivers, “An Address on the Repression of War Experience,” 173; Elaine Showalter, “Rivers and Sassoon: The Inscription of Male Gender Anxieties,” in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, eds. Margaret Randolph Higgonet et al. (Yale University Press, 1987), 61-69.

[218] Siegfried Sassoon, “Repression of War Experience,” Poetry Foundation, accessed December 17, 2021, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57267/repression-of-war-experience.

Hark! Thud, thud, thud,—quite soft ... they never cease—
Those whispering guns—O Christ, I want to go out
And screech at them to stop—I'm going crazy;
I'm going stark, staring mad because of the guns.[219]

The shift from second to the first person alongside Sassoon's usage of onomatopoeia creates a visceral image of someone, as the narrator himself says, "going stark, staring mad." Sassoon leans into the "hysterical" component of shell shock in this depiction and demonstrates that the breakdown is not the result of mere cowardice by illustrating that these symptoms have external causes. The narrator attributes his "stark, staring [madness]" to "the guns," which appear partly to disturb him so much because he has been instructed specifically to *not* think about them. This depiction, coupled with the obvious efforts on behalf of the narrator to better his condition, effectively validates the notion that shell shock is an actual ailment which the soldier suffers from.

As stated at the beginning of this essay, both Sassoon and Owen would go on to return to the front after their time at Craiglockhart, and only the former would survive the war.[220] Their poetry would come to be regarded as some of the best of World War I, and certainly the most subversive.[221] That is not to say that the views they expressed reflected even the majority of soldiers, but they do represent a significant shift in popular conceptions of the war that would have a lasting impact. Furthermore, along with the other poets of the war, they provide insightful commentary upon the intersection of traumatic experience with conceptions of masculinity and femininity.

Brooke and Grenfell illustrate the preexisting conception of masculinity which is something to be proven or earned and suggest that war embodies the perfect opportunity for one to do this. Sorley directly challenges this conception by arguing the very opposite, that it would be more honorable to have not fought at all. Gurney still subscribes to traditional notions of honor but demonstrates a trend within the poetry of the Great War which not only emphasizes themes of intense homosociality and homoeroticism but expresses a view that the trauma and loss inflicted by the war can only be fully understood by the men who fought it. The poetry of Owen suggests the physical and psychological trauma inflicted by the war emasculates its victims, and Sassoon's

[219] Sassoon, "Repression of War Experience."
[220] Carey, "The Poetry of the First World War," 201.
[221] Carey, "The Poetry of the First World War," 200-201.

poetry especially emphasizes that the feminine, "hysterical" aspects of shell shock have nothing to do with an inherent deficiency of masculinity within its victims.

Taken altogether, this collection of poetry exhibits a fundamental interconnectedness between understandings of gender and violence. While this relationship is explored predominantly within the frame of manhood in the poetry of the Great War, much light is shed upon the malleability of gender identity when exposed to traumatizing forces. Forced to reckon with this trauma, the war's poets have not only opened pathways for conversations regarding mental health in recent times but also challenged some of the harmfully misogynist restraints which have historically defined gender binaries. Such criticism paves the way for healthier and more inclusive conceptions of human identity.

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"It's foolish to run the risk of going mad for vanity's sake": The Tantalizing Effects of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Netflix's *The Queen's Gambit*

Hannah Brown

The Queen's Gambit, a novel originally written by Walter Tevis and published in 1983, was recently adapted into a Netflix limited series which premiered in October of 2020. The show quickly gained popularity and holds the record as one of the most viewed limited series ever, sixty-two million streams occurring within twenty-eight days of the series' release. The screenplay, which was over thirty years in the making, rejected by eight different directors, and underwent a total of nine rewrites, was officially picked up by Netflix in 2017. Audiences and critics have expressed their fondness for the show through rave reviews, which highlight the show's award-winning success. Most recently, the series won the award for outstanding limited or anthology series at the 73rd annual Primetime Emmy Awards among other various nominations.

Aside from the numbers and the accolades, critics and moviegoers have spoken of the initial shock of the show's success. It is undoubtedly questionable how a limited series about an orphaned chess prodigy reached millions in a matter of days. Chess set sales skyrocketed in the months following the show's debut. So, what is it about this show that has left households captivated by the presentation of an eclectic, once forgotten, wooden game board and its sixteen pieces? Perhaps it is the historically accurate costuming as presented within the ten-year span depicted throughout the series. It is no secret that Beth grows into what modern fashionistas refer to as a "fashion icon." Or maybe it is the feminist success storyline that has engrossed viewers and inspired young women and men around the world to strive for perfectionism and achievement. Others may see themselves in Beth as she desperately searches to find her place in the world in which she feels so lost. Some viewers may have experienced a trauma similar to Beth's and have been forever changed or damaged by its lasting effects, thus identifying with her mental anguish throughout the series. While these possibilities ring true, they each fall short in explaining the series' ability to dominate the charts. Though the show would not hold its success without each of these aspects, what truly elevates *The Queen's Gambit* is its cinematic presentation of an orphaned little girl, her internal and mental struggle with the tragic, suicidal death of her mother, and how the game of chess proves to be therapeutic in her mind's battle with destructive tendencies.

Additionally, the narration and the sequence of events are demonstrated in such a way that the audience is incorporated into Beth's own experience of her childhood trauma. The opening sequence of the show begins with a future, hungover Beth who is late for a chess match against Borgov in Paris 1967 (00:00:00-00:03:00). When she sits down and faces her opponent, she is transported back to the car crash in which her mother committed suicide (00:03:01-00:03:47). Immediately, the audience is invited to experience, alongside Beth, the trauma and the shock that would later consume her mental state. By adding this choice in the series timeline, the audience experiences the traumatic event firsthand rather than later. It is because of this incorporation that viewers are drawn into Beth's mental conflict with her childhood trauma. Yet Beth's trauma also remains a bit of a mystery to viewers until near the end of the series. The unveiling of her trauma is conducted in such a way that, as Beth remembers piece by piece, viewers come to understand how and why she has been so jolted and affected by the tragic death of her mother. Ultimately, Netflix's *The Queen's Gambit* highlights the physical and emotional effects of experiencing childhood trauma through the series protagonist, Elizabeth Harmon. Through repeated flashback sequences that occur when Beth is high on tranquilizers or in an unconscious state, the series captures the mind's battle with traumatic neurosis through Freud's concept of the repetition compulsion. Beth's melancholia, or her conscious struggle to process her trauma, is emphasized as the catalyst in her years-long battle with drug and alcohol addiction. As Beth ages and matures, she eventually reaches a state of mourning in which she is able to healthily accept her horrific childhood trauma. More specifically, within the final scene of the series, Beth recognizes that she can no longer allow herself to be susceptible to the same demons which controlled and eventually took her mother's life. By highlighting the relationship between traumatic neurosis and the activated death drive, *The Queen's Gambit* explores the effects that childhood trauma imposes on its victims and how, if seizing the opportunity, one can overcome traumatic events through reaching a state of acceptance as they learn how to live with their trauma.

Psychoanalysis and Trauma Theory

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory primarily focuses on the unconscious mind. Prior to his work in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud's concept of the unconscious had been linked solely to wish-fulfilled, dream-like sequences. In Volume I of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud reintroduces his concept of the pleasure principle by explaining, "the course of [mental] events is invariably set in motion by an unpleasurable tension, and it takes a direction such that its

final outcome coincides with a lowering of that tension - that is, with an avoidance of unpleasure or a production of pleasure" (594-5). He states that one unconsciously seeks their desires within the pleasure principle to shield themselves from pain and trauma through an "avoidance of unpleasure or a production of pleasure" (595). However, for victims of trauma, Freud proposed that there is a *beyond* the pleasure principle known as Thanatos or as he so often refers to it as the "death drive." Through this argument, Freud analyzes how the unconscious mind becomes intertwined with its death drive, therefore no longer seeking pleasure or abiding by the pleasure principle, but instead entering a state of self-destruction. Throughout *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* Freud examines how the mind processes trauma in relation to Thanatos, contending that the goal of all life is death through his examination of the death drive. He argues that traumatic neurosis, or what modern psychologists now refer to as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), catapults trauma victims into a vicious trauma-repeating cycle known as the "repetition compulsion."

Volume III of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* emphasizes the unhealthy inward battle (the repetition compulsion) that a PTSD victim suffers when they return to and replay their past trauma. It is within this recurring state in which individuals may develop instincts of destruction or aggression, sparking a relationship with and activating the individual's death drive. Freud argues that "The patient cannot remember the whole of what is repressed in him, and what he cannot remember may be precisely the essential part of it" (602). He goes on to say, "He [the patient] is obliged to *repeat* the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of, as the physician would prefer to see, *remembering* it as something belonging to the past" (602). Netflix's *The Queen's Gambit* reflects this battle between *repeating* versus *remembering* through its presentation of Beth Harmon and how she is caught within Freud's concept of the repetition compulsion. Throughout the series, as she replays her childhood trauma, Beth finds herself "obliged to *repeat* the repressed material as a contemporary experience" in such a way that "the physician" would consider being unhealthy (602). Because she cannot "remember the whole of what is repressed," she repeats her trauma over and over to understand how and why it happened. When her childhood trauma first occurred, nine-year-old Beth's mind was not fully conscious as her senses were so overwhelmed during their occurrence. After each trauma occurs, Beth becomes flooded by the shock that she cannot fully remember or grasp the sequence of events which happened, both during

the car crash and within her early childhood. Thus, she is constantly *repeating*, rather than *remembering*, the trauma.

The repetition of these past traumatic events only occurs within *The Queen's Gambit* when Beth enters some state of unconsciousness, whether it be a dream or a hallucination. Just as Freud proposes that one unconsciously seeks pleasure, he also argues that the repetition compulsion occurs when the individual is in an unconscious state. For Beth, each time that she flashes back to her childhood trauma she is either hallucinating from an overdose of tranquilizers or she is drunk. Within *The Interpretation of Dreams,* Freud proposes two key concepts which are displayed throughout *The Queen's Gambit*. He establishes the relationship between a dream's manifest and latent content and contends that the manifest content works as a "means of disguise" for the latent (51). The manifest content of the dream, Freud explains, is that which typically lies repressed within the conscious individual. He refers to the manifest content as the "obvious dream content," meaning that this content is the literal subject matter of the dream (45). Freud believes that this portion of the dream reveals the individual's true desires. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, he argues that not everything is for or about pleasure. For victims of PTSD, he suggests that their dreams are not fulfilling their original job to seek pleasure. It is not possible for someone experiencing traumatic neurosis or the repetition compulsion to abide by the idea of the pleasure principle because they are caught up within their own death drive. In Netflix's *The Queen's Gambit*, one example of Freud's manifest content occurs when Beth hallucinates the trauma of the car crash. The event was so traumatic in the initial moment that Beth could not consciously generate meaning and place it into her narrative. Her buried or repressed memory of this traumatic event only appears through Freud's concept of the dream's manifest content. Though Beth is not asleep when she experiences the repetition compulsion, she is in an altered state of mind and is unconscious while she hallucinates. It is only during these hallucinations in which she flashes back to or *repeats* her childhood trauma. The manifest content of these hallucinations, or the "obvious dream content" is the car crash, as it is the literal subject of each hallucination (45).

Freud also explores the context of a dream's latent content. He argues that latent content differs for a victim of traumatic neurosis. He explains that "the wishes represented as fulfilled in dreams are not always current wishes" (147). In Netflix's *The Queen's Gambit*, when Beth unconsciously *repeats* her trauma, she does not visualize her mother because she wishes she were dead. Instead, the "wish fulfilled" within Beth's dream is the visualization of and the ability to see

her mother again. Freud expands on this concept by providing an example in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Within the patient's dream, she visualizes the death of her nephew. Freud makes it clear that the "dream does not mean that she desires the death of her little nephew" (147). Instead, he explains that the manifest content disguises the meaning of the dream that lies within the latent content. Freud argues that the latent content "merely consoles the wish to see a certain beloved person again after a long separation" (147). The same can be said about Beth's hallucinations. As Beth's death drive has become activated, she feels lonely, scared, and misplaced. Although her mother was unstable and unreliable throughout her childhood, Beth longs for a sense of normalcy and to return to the past when she was able to be with and see her mother. While the main reason Beth is depicted as *repeating* rather than *remembering* the sequence of traumatic events which marred her childhood is that she is attempting to reach a state of understanding her trauma, it is arguable that she continues to return to these past situations because she finds comfort in seeing her mother again. However, ultimately the main purpose of her fascination with *repeating* the trauma is to generate the meaning of her mother's rash decisions. As she struggles to locate and find the meaning of the trauma, she also struggles to reach what Freud argues is a healthy state of *remembering* the past.

This endless battle of the repetition compulsion is further explored through Freud's work in *Mourning and Melancholia*. Within this work, he diagnoses *remembering* as a state of mourning and classifies *repeating* as the psychoanalytic term "melancholia." He emphasizes that both mourning and melancholia stem from the same "exciting causes" of "environmental issues," but, ultimately, it is the way in which one's mind processes the trauma that determines whether one enter a state of mourning or melancholia (243). He explains that mourning is "regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person" (243). However, in some cases, particularly in Beth Harmon's case, "the same [environmental] influences produce melancholia instead of mourning," and as a result, the victim of traumatic neurosis is then suspected to have developed a "pathological disposition" or condition (243). From this definition of mourning, Freud is arguing that mourning (*remembering*) is considered to be the "regular," or normal, reaction to a trauma, such as the loss of a loved one. An abnormal response or reaction to that same loss, such as self-destructive tendencies like drug or alcohol addiction, is an indicator of melancholia (*repeating*).

In *The Queen's Gambit*, mourning, or *remembering*, would take place if Beth were able to truly look back at her childhood trauma from a place of acceptance. If the flashbacks, as shown

throughout the series, would have been presented with a lighter tone in color scheme and from a more positive and continuous perspective, the audience would have witnessed Beth's grasp, understanding, and acceptance of the car crash and the other tragic events which filled her childhood. Instead, viewers are given a much darker tone in which the flashbacks are short and choppy, due to Beth's inability to remember all that which lies within her repressed unconscious. The failure to properly mourn the tragedy of the death of her mother is what Freud argues to be the abnormal state of melancholia. Freud describes the difference between these two stages of grief and explains that "in *mourning* it is the world that has become poor and empty", but in *melancholia*, "it is the ego itself" (*MM* 246). Viewers see this depicted throughout *The Queen's Gambit* as Beth develops an addiction to tranquilizers and alcohol, both self-destructive actions which stem from the activation of her death drive (Freud's Thanatos). Through this added element of the show, the audience witnesses how Beth's ego is "poor and empty" (246). As the series progresses, Beth remains within melancholia as she continues to battle traumatic neurosis. The melancholic, *repeated* events that she experiences during the repetition compulsion only continue to intensify as she struggles to fit her repressed, unconscious trauma into conscious narrative. This struggle leads to an identity crisis which only prolongs her self-destructiveness. It is not until the final scene of the series, in which Beth wears a hat that strikingly resembles the queen's chess piece that she reaches a healthy state of mourning or "*remembering* [her childhood trauma] as something belonging to the past" (*BPP* 602).

The Significance of Beth's Early Childhood Trauma

When psychoanalyzing *The Queen's Gambit*, it is crucial to begin with the three key memories of traumas that Beth endured during her early childhood, including the first moment that the show highlights her traumatic neurosis (PTSD). Within the opening sequence of Episode I, viewers see Beth standing in front of the car crash with police cars and ambulances in the background (00:03:41). One could assume that the car crash was the first traumatic event that Beth endured, especially considering that she is only nine years old at the time of the accident. However, as the episode continues, Beth experiences a flashback during her first night spent at Methuen which transports her back in time to before her mother, Alice, committed suicide. After Beth is involved in the car crash and witnesses her mother kill herself, she becomes trapped in Freud's concept of the repetition compulsion. Once entering the repetition compulsion, she begins *repeating* her repressed trauma and develops the unhealthy melancholic habit of replaying all her

childhood trauma in such a way that she ultimately feels as if she is actively reliving it within the current moment. I argue that the trauma *repeated* within Episode I, during her first battle with the repetition compulsion, is most likely a recollection of the first ever trauma that she endured as a child. This episode of the repetition compulsion was probably triggered by a conversation that she had earlier in the day with Jolene. Upon her first day at Methuen Home for Girls, Jolene asks, "your momma and daddy both dead?", to which Beth responds by nodding her head (00:08:57-00:09:03). Viewers have no reason to believe this is not true because her father has yet to be shown on screen. However, later that night, as Beth sleeps in her bed at Methuen for the first time, her repressed memory informs the audience that her father is alive. Beth's unconscious desire to understand why her father left is triggered when Jolene mentions her parents. But because Beth is experiencing traumatic neurosis and is caught within the repetition compulsion, her dreams (or in her case, unconscious desires) are unable to fulfill their original job of seeking pleasure. Beth must *repeat* her trauma through her dream's latent content to see her father again. By repeating her father's exit, she is not seeking pleasure in his absence. Instead, Freud argues that for victims of traumatic neurosis, their dream latent does not always represent a "current wish" that is being fulfilled (*ID* 147). In Beth's case, she does not *repeat* the trauma of her dad leaving because she found pleasure in his leaving. Instead, she *repeats* this concrete moment in her childhood because this memory is the only way to see her father again.

Lying on her bed, Beth begins to look up at the ceiling. The moonlight reflects through the window across the room and she, along with the audience, can see the shadow of a group of skinny tree limbs moving slowly while the wind makes whistling sounds (00:11:35-00:11:45). Soon, the ceiling morphs into five-year-old Beth peeking out the window of her old house while her father knocks on the door (00:11:58-00:12:04). The screen is very dark, and the mood is emphasized by a deep bluish filter. It can be understood that Beth's mother is both high and very tense based on her mannerisms and actions. Her father stands outside and asks to be let in (00:11:58-00:12:04). His tone of voice plays a key role in the analysis of this important scene. As he explains that it has "taken a whole month" to find Beth and her mother, one would expect a more urgent and concerned tone (00:12:00-00:12:03). Instead, viewers hear a tired and worn-out speaker who halfway attempts to win over Alice. This is the first glimpse that the audience gets into Beth's early home life and her relationship with her father. It appears evident that she does not have a stable or reliable parental figure in either her father or her mother. But perhaps what may be the most poignant and

chilling part of Beth's *repeated* memory here is the way in which her father leaves her behind so effortlessly. It can be argued that this incident contributed to Beth's inability to form relationships and emotions for those around her. Throughout the series, Beth is quite reclusive, struggling to form attachments to anyone other than chess. In Methuen she is surrounded by people, but she is emotionally alone. She even struggles to form a bond with her adoptive mother, Mrs. Wheatley, who she spends a great deal of time with in her early teenage years. Her traumatic neurosis and death drive, which were activated when her father left her behind, project her to isolation. As her father continues to stand outside of the double wide trailer, he eventually tells Alice that "once [he] drives away [he's] not coming back" (00:13:35-00:13:40). In the flashback, Beth, wearing a nightgown, stands in front of a window peering out at her father. Her desolate eyes speak for her silenced voice while they watch her father turn away from the door and get inside the car (00:13:41-00:13:52). When her father opens the car door, they share a look through the window (00:13:41-00:13:52). The audience never sees Beth's end of the long stare, but instead the camera focuses on her father as he glares straight into the lens, which is angled at the window. By using this angle, those watching the show feel cathartic and as if it were happening specifically to them. The look shared between Beth and her father is not an "I'll see you later" goodbye, but rather a moment shared between the two in which they both understand to be their last, and director Scott Frank grants the audience the opportunity to experience the confusion and hurt alongside Beth. While it is unimaginable what Beth was feeling in this exact moment, Frank highlights how it *may* have felt by presenting their final goodbye in such an empathetic way. Her father never waves at her nor does he blow her a kiss goodbye. He also does not attempt to fight for his child to be removed from this horrific lifestyle, making it quite understandable why Beth *repeats* this event rather than *remembers* it. Her father never gave her a clear answer as to why he left her; he just left and never looked back. Her struggle with the traumatic neurosis of this memory is highlighted through her melancholic reaction expressed in a closeup once the flashback is over. Her facial expression shows confusion and hurt after she thinks about her father. This *repeated* episode is not an example of what Freud would call healthy mourning. Instead, this memory was *repeated* due to her unconscious desire to understand why her father left her and why he has never come back. Thus, Beth is experiencing melancholia.

In addition to the trauma of her father's abandonment, another significant memory that Beth *repeats* is one of Alice at the lake. The camera highlights young Beth tearfully crying out for

her mother, whom she mistakes to have drowned underneath the current of the lake. Added cinematic effects, such as a blue filtered haze and a track from the series' score, contribute significantly to this melancholic *repeated* memory. This flashback occurs during Episode III: "Doubled Pawns," and is the only *repeated* memory in which neither Beth nor her mother are heard. In fact, the only sound the audience hears is a haunting orchestration, which dramatically intensifies as Beth suspects that her mother has drowned. When the repetition compulsion begins, the audience sees Beth sitting on the bay of the lake (00:00:25). Her mother begins taking off her clothes before jumping into the water (00:00:22). Immediately, Beth's face grows a concerned look. Seconds turn into what seems like eternity while Alice is under water and Beth becomes visibly upset, holding back tears. During this intense moment, a track titled "The Lake" fills the background, almost as if it were speaking for Beth's inner thoughts, since the audience cannot hear them. In "*Queen's Gambit* Music Soars," Jon Burlingame interviews composer Carlos Rafael Rivera on his composition of the series' score. Rivera states that, during her childhood, Beth was in a "world of grays and browns," living through dark experiences (Rivera). He also states that he was "scoring her emotional state" within the soundtrack (Rivera). It is clear that "The Lake" speaks for Beth's inward pain and fear while she watches her mother swim away. At this point, she has already lived through the trauma of her father leaving.

As Beth fears that her mother has drowned, the music, along with her facial expressions, show how traumatized and terrified she is of being left alone. This is ironic, considering how she continuously isolates herself throughout the series. When Alice finally emerges from the water, reaching an island in the middle, she crawls up onto a floating piece of metal and waves to Beth, who watches from the shore (00:00:59-00:01:10). The camera angle here is important to consider. The frame captures Beth from behind in the foreground from the shoulders up, while focusing on Alice waving in the background (00:01:10). Once again, director Scott Frank uses the camera work to incorporate the audience into Beth's battle with traumatic neurosis. Through this specific shot, the audience is invited to feel Alice waving back at them, assuring them that she is okay before jumping back into the water and embracing Beth when she reaches the shore (00:01:20). When analyzing this flashback, two key Freudian concepts occur. Beth's dream manifest content is presented through her *repeating* of her mother swimming away from her. The manifest content, or "obvious dream content," of this flashback is her hallucination of her mother swimming at the lake. The latent content, or the underlying meaning of the *repeated* incident consists of two things: her

fear of abandonment and her struggle to process her mother's death. When Beth stands alone on the shore, she witnesses her mother swimming further and further away from her, triggering her fear of being left alone. This flashback also is the only memory Beth has in which she associates her mother with death other than the memory of the car crash. As Beth struggles to make sense of and understand why her mother killed herself, she *repeats* the trauma of the lake to put pieces of the narrative together. However, her battle with the repetition compulsion denies her the ability to fully understand her childhood trauma because she is processing it in a melancholic way rather than *remembering* it through a proper state of mourning.

The third significant childhood flashback shows viewers what happened when Beth was nearly killed during her mother's suicide. Not only did Alice intend to kill herself, but she also attempted to take Beth down with her. This tragic and traumatic incident is fully depicted in the final episode, "End Game," but is partially revealed in various scenes across the seven-episode series. These scattered recollections of the event demonstrate Beth's inability to properly process the trauma. She *repeats* the events to try to understand how and why they occurred. In Episode VII: "End Game," viewers see Alice confronting Beth's father, who has moved on to a new life and has a wife and child. She tells him that she "can no longer do this," and explains that she feels like she is "letting her down" (00:01:01-00:01:07). Her father does not attempt to help Beth, despite knowing that she is in the vehicle. After they leave, Beth can see her mother crying through the rearview mirror. She questions, "Mama?" before asking "who was that?" (00:01:41-00:01:45). Alice replies, "a mistake. A rounding error. Just a problem I gotta solve" (00:01:47-00:01:57). Beth asks, "what problem?" and Alice replies tearfully, "what I do with you" (00:42:47-00:42:49). As Alice speeds around a curve, the camera shows a close up of Beth look around before she asks, "Mama?" again (00:43:00). Alice looks at her through the rearview and says, "close your eyes" before she purposely drives the vehicle into an oncoming truck (00:43:03-00:43:12). Throughout the series, Beth experiences traumatic neurosis mainly from this specific trauma. However, her other childhood traumas do contribute to her battle with the repetition compulsion. Beth's traumatic neurosis disables her from remembering the events of this trauma because her mind was not conscious during the events leading up to the accident and the actual accident itself. To protect her body from the initial pain, her brain became so overwhelmed by the shock that she did not process the events consciously. Therefore, she now *repeats* the crash because she is trying to place it into her conscious narrative. This specific trauma proves to be what pushes Beth towards giving

into the effects of Thanatos as she starts to believe that her mother's choices have predestined her own life's fate.

Drugs and The Death Drive

Beth's traumatic neurosis influences her endless battle with the repetition compulsion. She struggles to process her trauma properly and is unable to mourn Alice's death in a healthy way. This is because she is unable to understand her childhood trauma and fails to make sense of it, thus her unconscious mind is forced to *repeat* the past and enters a state of melancholia, activating her death drive. While caught within the repetition compulsion, Beth's death drive influences her development of self-destructiveness. These episodes of *repeating* her traumas are only experienced when she is in some sort of unconscious state, either drunk or high. When she arrives at the orphanage, she is immediately introduced to and expected to take daily "vitamins". The tranquilizers are shown to be a fictional version of a modern-day Librium, or what was known during the 1950s-70s as chlordiazepoxide. These pills were used to treat anxiety disorders in children throughout the former period and were especially common within orphanages, shelters, or institutions in which large numbers of young kids, particularly girls, were housed. Susan Speaker, in "From 'Happiness Pills' to 'National Nightmare': Changing Cultural Assessment of Minor Tranquilizers in America, 1955–1980" contextualizes the characterization of "addicted America", an idea and movement which swept the nation, the press, and legislative hearings throughout the 1950s through the 1980s. She explains how there became a "common wisdom" that was associated with the discussion of tranquilizers throughout these years (340). There are two key points that Speaker discusses that are presented in *The Queen's Gambit*: "first, that the drugs are invariably addictive; and fourth, that people who used tranquilizers were self-indulgent seekers of fast relief" (340). Scott Frank's directorial vision incorporates each of these different aspects into the show's storyline.

Speaker's argument that the "drugs are inherently addictive" is explored in the final scene of Episode I: "Openings" (340). After becoming accustomed to taking the tranquilizers daily, suddenly there is a "new state law" enforced that demands there be "no more tranquilizers for kids" (00:44:00-00:44:03). Portions of the episode explore Beth experiencing withdrawal symptoms, growing increasingly irritated and fidgety as time progresses. Finally, at the end of the episode, Beth has had all that she can take. She knows that the pills are locked in the medicine room and can see them through the clear glass window. While the girls are watching *The Robe*, Beth asks

Mr. Fergusson if she can go to the bathroom (00:52:56). However, she leaves the room with the intention to break into the medicine room to take the tranquilizers. Using a screwdriver, Beth unlocks the sealed window (00:54:06). Before she begins to push the window seal upwards, the antagonist of the film yells out, "into your kingdom!" (00:54:09-00:54:13). At that, Beth opens the window fully and the frame pauses on a still of the two jars of pills sitting high up on the table (00:54:30). During this stilled focus, a chorus of angelic, yet haunting singing can be heard (00:54:22-00:54:29). With Beth standing before the pills, the straight angle camera work proposes the idea that the pills are placed on an altar. The chorus begins singing multiple "hallelujahs!" as she stuffs her mouth full of pills (00:55:28). It is here that Beth essentially reaches her own state of hallelujah as she marches fully into her own kingdom. Beth's death drive, which was triggered by her traumatic neurosis, is further activated when she becomes addicted to the tranquilizers. Her addiction is what ultimately worsens her destructive tendencies as she begins to constantly crave the "instant relief" that the pills give (*HP* 340). Initially, she just ingests the pills and fills both of her pockets (00:55:28-00:55:34). However, after a moment of hesitation, she grabs the entire jar before attempting to exit the room (00:56:00-00:56:04). Caught by Mrs. Deardorf, who yells, "Elizabeth!", Beth unsteadily turns to face her. Standing on a wooden chair, the camera zooms out to capture an entire full body shot of Beth and the jar (00:56:11). She responds to Mrs. Deardorf by asking, "Mama?" (00:56:05) She then falls onto the floor, the jar breaking and pills exploding around her while she lies unconscious (00:56:16-00:56:22). This scene demonstrates how "inherently" addictive the tranquilizers have become (340). Beth desired the pills' "instant relief" so much that she was willing to break into the medicine room and accept whatever punishment she may receive (340). She could not resist the opportunity to take multiple tranquilizers within the moment that she stole the jar.

Beth's addiction worsens as she realizes that the tranquilizers provide a "fast relief" for her pain (*HP* 340). When she ingests handfuls of the pills, she immediately feels the aid that the drug provides. Though medication has a stigma for treating wounds that can primarily be seen, modern trauma expert Cathy Caruth argues that trauma impacts beyond the superficial layers of the skin. She explains in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* that "trauma is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind" (8). For Beth, the green pills help her cope, though in an unhealthy way according to Freud, with the internal injury that she suffers from due to the loss of her father and mother. Her relationship with the pills and how they provide "fast

relief" is highlighted in Episode I "Openings." After Jolene teaches Beth how to secretly save the pills for nighttime, Beth consistently yearns each night for the "fast relief" she feels after she takes the medication (*HP* 340). In a conversation with Jolene, she emphasizes her longing for the "fast relief" that the pills give her (340). She tells Jolene, "You were right; the vitamins work better at night" (00:20:14-00:20:17). As Jolene approves of Beth's statement, she asks her how many pills she took. Beth responds with, "I don't know. Sometimes I skip a day or a bunch of days, then take two or three. I like the way it feels" (00:20:18-00:20:28). The feeling that Beth admits she likes is not merely just the act of swallowing the pills. Instead, it is the feeling of "fast relief" that the pills provide, as emphasized by Speaker (340).

Wieder and Kaplan discuss the effects of adolescent drug use in their essay, "Drug Use in Adolescents." They argue that "the dominant conscious motive for drug use is not the seeking of 'kicks,' but the wish to produce pharmacologically a reduction in distress that the individual cannot achieve by his own psychic efforts" (403). When Beth tells Jolene that she "likes the way it feels" when she "takes two or three" tranquilizers, she is referring to the *lack* of feeling that the drug produces (00:20:18-00:20:28). As her death drive has become activated from her development of traumatic neurosis, she consciously feels the inward pain that the trauma produced within. She has learned that the tranquilizers induce a "reduction in distress," especially if she takes more than the recommended amount (403). This desire to not feel is what Wieder and Kaplan describe to be the placebo effect, in which drug users become attached not only to the "agent," but to the "act of using it" (400). They argue that the "act of" drug use "may be in the service of fulfilling wishes to control, attack, or influence the object or self" (400). For Beth, the desire to feel the "reduction in stress" prolongs her struggle with addiction (403). She does not want to consciously face her trauma, so she chooses to ignore it through the abuse of the pills. Ironically, though, this abuse forces her into a state of unconsciousness which in turn brings up her trauma through the repetition of compulsion. So, she takes the drugs to not feel the pain that she would feel if she were consciously aware, but her unconscious mind and body still experience and *repeat* the trauma while she is high.

The feeling that the tranquilizer's placebo effect brings out in Beth influences her interest in other self-destructive tendencies. Throughout the seven episodes, Beth tries anything that she is offered (or not offered) in an attempt to reduce her conscious pain. As the series continues, her progression with the inability to process her trauma (melancholia) further activates her death drive,

which forces her to be unable to properly face her trauma (mourning). With her death drive motivating her choices and decisions, Beth eventually reaches a point where she is constantly either high or drunk, or both at the same time. In Episode I: "Openings," the series begins futuristically in Paris in 1967 before flashing back to the present day. The next to last episode of the series, "Adjournment," picks back up at this timeline before the show concludes. In "Openings," the audience hears several knocks on a hotel door before Beth drunkenly rises from the bathtub (00:00:01-00:00:08). It is later learned, in "Adjournment," that she is late for a match with Borgov, her most challenging opponent, the Russian World Champion. Her outfit is scattered across the room. As she frantically attempts to find her dress and shoes in "Openings," she opens the drapes (00:00:50-00:00:55). The light reveals a room full of alcohol and drugs. The camera captures a shot of a black and white chess board, covered in tiny alcohol bottles rather than knights, rooks, and pawns (00:01:09). Glancing across the table, she spots a green case. The frame pauses for a moment, emphasizing a still of two green tranquilizers in her hand before she takes them (00:01:13). Her ingestion of the pills, prior to the chess match, emphasizes Wieder and Kaplan's point that the use of drugs may enhance "wishes to control, attack, or influence the self" (400). Beth develops a relationship with chess because it comes so naturally to her. If she had been introduced to the game before she would have taken her first pill, perhaps she would have never become so dependent on their stress and pain-relieving qualities. However, what elevates her addiction to a new level is her realization that if she uses the drugs before a game their pharmacological effects will produce the ability for her to maintain "control" and "attack" within the checkerboard and, as she mistakenly thought, "control" of her life (400).

Chess and Control

In Episode One: "Openings," Beth is first introduced to chess when she is sent to the basement to clean erasers. From a distance, she sees the school janitor, Mr. Shaibel, moving rooks and pawns across the board. She later asks if she can play but is denied. After she verbally proves to him that she knows how the pieces move, he offers her a seat to play. In the years to follow, chess becomes a source of therapy for Beth. Her addiction to drugs allows her to repress her feelings and unconsciously process her trauma, but her relationship with chess allows her to actively work through scenarios with her own two hands. Within the sixty-four squared board, Beth is now in the driver's seat instead of Alice. She is free to choose and do what she wants; she has full control. This control is truly maintained through Beth's genius and her ability to see and

understand the board on an expert level. However, Beth struggles to see her own ability to maintain this control, thus she continues to rely on the tranquilizer's placebo effects to aid her game. There are several times that the series emphasizes her obsession with control. While Beth is still learning the basics of the game in "Openings," she experiences her first game loss. As someone who is obsessed with control, she does not take this well. When Mr. Shaibel tells her, "You resign now," and signals for her to lay her king down; she refuses by saying, "no" (00:25:12). Her teacher stands his ground and says, "Yes. You have resigned the game" (00:25:13-00:25:14). Beth's anger builds, but not because she lost. Of course, the loss adds to her frustration, but her real anger comes not from her forced resignation, but her inability to keep control of the board. When Beth was in the backseat of her mother's vehicle, she could not control Alice's choices. She was a helpless nine-year-old child who was forced to endure the trauma that her mother caused. Because of her genius, she is able to understand chess on a mastery level. For Beth, winning means obtaining control. It is rare that she experiences a loss in the game, but when she does, she struggles to forgive herself and let it go because when she could not control her mother's actions, the unthinkable occurred.

This attempt to maintain control not only further triggers her death drive, but also encourages her use of drugs and alcohol. At Methuen, after listening to Jolene's suggestion to take the pills at night, Beth realizes that she can hallucinate the chess board on the ceiling. These images helped Beth quickly learn, in her early years, the basics of the game. Later in the series, the hallucinations become the way for Beth to beat her opponents. If she makes a mistake in a match or if she has to pause the game and resume it at a later time, she replays both her moves and her opponent's moves on the ceiling. By analyzing each move, the drugs allow her to maintain control through the placebo effect, as Wieder and Kaplan suggest. The most prominent hallucination that Beth experiences occurs in Episode Five: "Fork," when Harry Beltik decides to move out of the house. Although they had been living and sleeping together, Beth could not bring herself to connect with him. This is influenced by the traumatic neurosis of her mother. Alice groomed Beth to isolate herself from the world. Though she is never physically alone in *The Queen's Gambit*, as she has many friends, she essentially is emotionally alone until the end of the series because she resists forming relationships with those around her. After Beltik leaves, Beth plays in the U.S. Championship in Ohio in 1967. The hallucination that she experiences in Ohio is different from any of her past or future ones. Although she never admits it, she misses Beltik. One aspect of Beth that the series pushes is that she hates to be alone, yet she isolates herself constantly. This time, as

Beth hallucinates the board and its pieces on the ceiling, she is not just practicing for her upcoming match. Instead, she is using chess as her "reduction in distress" to repress the regret and anger that she feels for pushing Beltik away (*DUA* 403). She craves the game like it is a drug because it is another avenue for her to escape her pain and trauma. In this world of kings and queens, emotions do not exist. Only logic resides within the board, thus Beth desires to be open yet her traumatic neurosis pushes her to isolate out of fear that she will lose another person that she cares about. Chess not only serves as her therapy for coping with the death of her mother, but it also can be a distraction from her anger with herself at times.

Despite her desire for control, Beth also realizes that she is a very talented player. This natural ability eventually morphs into a natural love for the game. Beth rarely expresses her feelings to those she is close to, much less someone she does not know. Which is what is so profound about her conversation with a magazine reporter in which she opens up about her relationship with chess. In Episode III: "Doubled Pawns," she is asked what it is like to be a girl playing in a man's sport. She does not really understand why the interviewer asks this question because she herself has never considered it. Her genius has allowed her to play the game freely, despite her gender. She is not concerned with paving the way for women who may follow in her footsteps. Her only priority is winning and controlling the board. The interviewer continues by asking her if it is intimidating, explaining that she was not allowed to be competitive when she was Beth's age (00:14:04-00:14:08). Beth does not hesitate when she responds with, "chess isn't always competitive" (00:14:09-00:14:10). She is interrupted by the interviewer who says, "no, but you play to win" (00:14:11). Beth acknowledges this truth but admits that "Chess can also be…beautiful" (00:14:12-00:14:18). When asked if she imagined the king to be her father and the queen to be her mother, she brushes off the question by calling them "just pieces" (00:14:56-00:15:06). She continues to say, "It was the board I noticed first. It's an entire world of just sixty-four squares. I feel safe in it. I can control it; I can dominate it, and it's predictable" (00:15:07-00:15:27). This is the first and only time that she acknowledges her obsession with control. She admits that it was not the pieces that caught her eye, but the board. The sixty-four squared board seems tangible to her because it is small enough to maintain control of. Not only can she control it, but she can also *predict* it. For so long she could not control either of her parent's actions. She could not control her father walking out and leaving her. She could not control her mother's drug and alcohol abuse. And she surely could not control the vehicle as Alice attempted to take them

both out. For much of the series, she struggles with anger at herself for not being able to predict or foresee her mother's suicide. The real world, her childhood, her parents' choices, these are far too big for her to oversee, control, and predict. But chess is small enough that it can be compartmentalized within a square world, one that Beth understands and knows so well that she is in the driver's seat.

Madness Versus Genius

When Alice begins frantically ripping portraits off the wall and forcefully grabbing personal belongings in Episode I: "Openings," viewers can understand why Beth battles so deeply with her past trauma (00:12:19-00:12:26). As part of the purging of her belongings, Alice throws down a book that she wrote. Beth picks it up and sees the words inscribed on the cover "MONOMIAL REPRESENTATIONS AND SYMMETRIC PRESENTATIONS BY ALICE HARMON PH. D. DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS CORNELL UNIVERSITY" (00:13:03). While this takes place during the first episode, Beth's identity crisis remains constant throughout the limited series. In his book, *Memory, Trauma, and Identity*, Ron Eyerman contextualizes the relationship between these three key concepts. Although his writing primarily focuses on small or large collective groups, his claim regarding the connection between trauma and identity rings true for Beth Harmon throughout *The Queen's Gambit*. Eyerman argues that "trauma is a discursive response to a tear in the social fabric, a massive disruption that occurs when the foundations of established identity are shaken by one or a series of seemingly inter-related occurrences" (145). Based on the title of Alice's book, viewers infer that she was very intellectually gifted and educated. Ironically, a striking parallel can be drawn between Alice's Ph. D. and Beth's giftedness in chess. Because Beth vividly remembers her mother's academic success, it can be argued that her identity crisis comes from her association between genius and madness. Eyerman argues that "memory is intimately bound up with identity formation" (146). Beth's mind pairs genius with madness because of her mother. She remembers that her mother was once academically gifted, but eventually went crazy. Beth's death drive increases throughout the series as she struggles with the idea that she may go mad like her mother. She does not know what her identity is outside of the identity that Alice predestined for her, so as she struggles with inward hate and fear, she chooses self-destruction because it is all she has ever known. In "Loss, Rage, and Repetition," Martha Wolfenstein studies the ways in which children and adolescents react to and cope with the loss of a parent. Wolfenstein explains that "instead of grief, the most

common reaction to the loss of a parent which we find in children and adolescents is rage" (432). This rage is expressed by Beth multiple times during the series. Not only is she angry at her mother for killing herself, but she is also angry at her own self for not seeing it coming. In addition, she is angry at the potential for madness within herself. This anger further activates her death drive because she struggles to understand that she can overcome her addictions and just be a genius, rather than a genius gone mad. Her friends and acquaintances see the potential for insanity through her addiction and obsession which worsens as her death drive catapults itself into taking over her thoughts and actions.

Harry Beltik is the first person to truly notice her self-destructiveness and is one of only two people to confront her about it. Beltik arrives at Beth's with the intention to help her prepare for the U.S. Championship in Episode IV: "Fork." When he tells Beth that he has studied her match against Benny Watts "a dozen times," Beth asks why, claiming that it is "ancient history" and that she is a "different player now" (00:06:05-00:06:14). Beltik's response is the first time since Mr. Shaibel told Beth to resign, in which someone confronts her about her behavior. He says, "You're stubborn, so you get mad, and when that happens, you can only see what's right in front of you" (00:06:18-00:06:24). He touches on Beth's inner anger that she exhibits when she loses control during a game. As Wolfenstein emphasizes, most young children and adolescents do not properly cope with the loss, entering a state of melancholia rather than mourning. Beth's anger when she loses control does not stem from the loss of the game itself, but simply from the loss of control. When she loses a game, for her it is almost as if she experiences the same rage that she feels for her mother's own death. Her melancholia does not come from the simple act of Alice killing herself, but from the fact that she could not control her mother's actions. Beltik also warns Beth that "It's foolish to run this risk of going mad for vanity's sake" (00:19:57-00:20:02). He is the first and only person to confront Beth about the possibility that her obsession could turn into madness, though Beth has always been terrified that she would end up like her mother. Beltik is brave enough to warn her about where she might end up if she were to continue down the same path. He can see that her death drive is pushing her towards a state of *complete* destruction. These catastrophic choices intensify in Episode VI: "Adjournment." As Beth's death drive reaches its climax, she enters a period where is both drunk and high for multiple days on end. Her traumatic neurosis is triggered when she hears a singer at a restaurant singing the words, "I remember you, but I can't remember love when I do" (00:45:48-00:45:58). There words trigger her trauma as she

continues to struggle with the loss of her mother and specifically with the loss of her adoptive mother, Mrs. Wheatley. She is handed a drink before the camera cuts to her drunkenly entering the house with a bottle of liquor in her hand (00:46:40). The phone rings and it is Beltik, but Beth puts the phone down and walks away (00:47:09-00:47:10). She is shown smoking, taking pills, and drinking until she makes herself sick (00:47:12-00:48:18). Eventually, her body cannot take the drugs and alcohol anymore and she passes out on the floor as Beltik knocks on the front door (00:49:49-00:50:23).

In these scenes, Beth almost gives in to the potential of going mad. Her mind almost seizes its power over her through its destructive state. Thanatos takes complete control as she believes that the drugs and alcohol are providing a "reduction in stress" (*DUA* 403). However, their pharmacological effects are only worsening her death drive as they push her farther away from reaching a state of mourning. When she shows to the local tournament the next day, Beltik confronts her again. This time, he gives his last and most frank advice. When he sees Beth outside, he tells her that he is worried about her (00:54:30-00:54:32). Beth blows him off until he tells her that he has seen her a few times at the supermarket (00:54:35-00:54:38). She angrily asks why he never said hello and he explains that she did not seem "approachable" (00:54:50-00:54:57). Beltik pleads for her, saying that she "needs help" before comparing her to his late drunk father (00:55:08-00:55:29). Their conversation is interrupted and Beltik wishes her "good luck" before getting in his vehicle (00:55:52-00:55:55). This conversation proves to be fundamental in Beth's journey towards accepting her trauma and learning to mourn the death of her mother. Though she does not realize it at the moment, Beltik's advice speaks for her inward desire to be free of her past trauma and to live her life fully without the baggage that her mother has left behind. His words spark a change in her mental state as she begins to realize the importance of facing her trauma instead of running from it.

After being confronted by Beltik, Beth understands that she needs to consciously process her trauma and change her lifestyle. When Jolene decides to stay with Beth after they reunite in Episode VII: "End Game," she picks up a bottle of the tranquilizers and Beth embarrassingly admits that she still takes them (00:04:26). Jolene responds and says that it "looks like you're doing a lot more than pills" (00:04:27-00:04:31). Beth admits that she needs to "quit the wine and the pills and clean this place up," making this the first time that she verbalizes her addiction and how it has gotten out of hand (00:04:58-00:05:07). Jolene tells her that she needs to "look at where

you're at," saying that "which after being here all of five minutes looks like it's at the bottom of a fucking hole, and it's looking a lot like you dug it yourself" (00:05:55-00:06:07). Once again, Beth is confronted about her self destructiveness. This time, by someone other than Beltik. Those around her can see how her traumatic neurosis has influenced her death drive's instinct to isolate herself and seek relief through drugs and alcohol. Beth responds to Jolene by suggesting that "maybe it's in my blood," telling Jolene that her "mother went crazy" (00:06:11-00:06:15). Jolene asks, "went crazy or always was?" (00:06:16). Beth looks down and says, "I don't know" (00:06:17-00:06:19). This is the only time that Beth admits to anyone that she is afraid of becoming like her mother. For her entire young adult life, she has feared that she would "go mad for vanity's sake," as Beltik suggests in Episode V: "Fork," and fall in her mother's footsteps (00:19:57-00:20:02). This is a turning point for Beth as she begins to consciously process her trauma healthily. Jolene advises her, "She gone. Quit thinking about it. It's not doing you any good" (00:06:26-00:06:31). This advice, along with Beltik's concern are the pushes in the right direction that Beth needed to reach an acceptance of her past (mourning).

"Sygrayem" – Let's Play

As the series comes to its conclusion in Episode VII: "End Game," Beth begins to come out of her years long battle with traumatic neurosis and the repetition compulsion and moves from a state of melancholia and mourning. This life changing move unravels quickly within the one-hour episode. After Jolene and Beth have a heart-to-heart, Beth begins to understand that she needs to let go of the pills and the alcohol so that she can regain control of her life. The next step towards reaching Freud's concept of mourning occurs when Beth and Jolene go on a road trip to attend Mr. Shaibel's funeral. Beth directs Jolene on how to get to her old house. The audience has seen this trailer once before in the lake scene in Episode III: "Doubled Pawns." Prior to this, Beth is not shown taking any pills or drinking, so it is safe to assume that she is sober here and is consciously processing her past. Beth tells Jolene, "My mama came from money. Then she married into more of it" (00:08:50-00:08:54). Jolene asks, "Then how'd y'all end up way out here?" (00:09:01-00:09:02). Although Beth does not elaborate and only responds with "it's complicated," this is the first time that she consciously verbalizes her trauma (00:09:05). Here, she has entered the beginning stages of overcoming "the loss of the object," what Freud defines as "normal mourning" (*MM* 255). This journey towards "normal mourning" continues after Beth and Jolene attend Mr. Shaibel's funeral. When they first arrive at Methuen, Beth does not want to go in. Eventually, she

decides to go inside. She goes to the basement and sees the table and chair, the place where Mr. Shaibel taught her how to play. She sits down in his chair and chokes back tears before she notices pictures of her on a board in front of her (00:14:50-00:15:20). As her eyes fill with tears, she takes a picture of her and Mr. Shaibel from the board before returning to Jolene in the car (00:15:50-00:16:12). She shows Jolene the picture and begins to cry (00:16:13-00:16:24). She lays into Jolene as she continues to cry (00:16:25-00:16:48). Finally, Beth has learned to consciously grieve rather than turning to drugs for their "reduction in distress" (*DUA* 403). Here, Beth is not only overcoming "the loss of the object," or the loss of Mr. Shaibel, but she is also learning to grieve the fact that she struggled to build relationships with those she cares about (*MM* 255). In an interview with Scott Simon, Anya Taylor-Joy, who plays Beth, speaks on this struggle to connect with others. She says, "There's this massive pull for Beth between wanting to be close to people and feeling desperately lonely, but also having an understanding from her history that people will only ever let her down and people will only ever leave her" (Taylor-Joy). Beth struggled to connect with Mr. Shaibel because she was so traumatized from her past. She never told him thank you for teaching her the game, and she knows and regrets that at this moment. She deeply regrets her isolation as well, but she now realizes that she must face her inward battles rather than run from them. Beth's reaction to the loss of Mr. Shaibel is one of "normal mourning" instead of melancholia because she can now look back at the past with profound *remembrance* rather than *repeating* the past due to traumatic neurosis (*MM* 255).

Once Beth properly grieves the death of Mr. Shaibel, she begins to continue towards the path of accepting her childhood trauma. While in Russia for the World Championship, in the final episode: "End Game," Beth finally lets go of the pills and throws them away for good. Lying on the bed, she looks over at the empty pill case (00:42:33). She begins to flash back to the events of the car crash, the first time the audience sees the scene in full. Here, she is not *repeating* (melancholia) the events. Instead, she is *remembering* (mourning) them as she faces her traumatic neurosis head on for the first time. She wrestles with the idea for a minute, but she eventually goes into the bathroom and dumps a bottle of pills into the toilet (00:43:21-00:43:24). She grabs the lever above her and flushes them (00:43:27). She realizes that she does not want to become susceptible to the same demons that took her mother, so she chooses to let go of her death drive and begins to "normally mourn" her past (*MM* 255). Throwing the pills away not only represents her acceptance of her past, but it also highlights her newfound sense of self identity. She now

understands that she does not have to be like her mother. She can be just a genius and not go mad. Her disposal of the pills also represents her faith in her ability as a player.

Prior to this, she has never played in a match without them. Beth has grown into understanding her ability to see the board on her own. This is highlighted when she visualizes the board on the ceiling (without the pills) during the final match against Borgov (00:56:18). She takes the advice of her chess friends and visualizes the scenarios they talked about prior to the game. This advice is what leads her to win the championship, becoming the first-ever female World Champion and beating a Soviet at his own game. Beth is finally able to form connections with those around her, letting go of the fear that her trauma imposed. Though her friends have always been there, when she visualizes their advice on the ceiling, it demonstrates how she has learned to trust them and let them in. After she wins the game, she is offered the opportunity to return to the United States to play for the President. She kindly asks her driver to "stop the car, please" and says that she would "like to walk" (01:02:26). As her agent tells her that she is "going to miss the flight," she shuts the car door and smiles (01:02:31-01:02:33). This is the first time, throughout the series, that Beth truly exhibits a genuine, happy smile. Her outfit consists of a long, white trench coat, a black turtleneck, white pants, and white boots (01:02:33). She also wears a white hat that strikingly resembles the top of the queen's chess piece (01:02:33). She has won the battle of overcoming her past trauma and all the baggage that it brought with it. The camera follows her while she walks down the street and cheerful music fills the background, majorly contrasting from the haunting music played during the flashback of the lake. The joyful sound of the piano as it builds into a full orchestra demonstrates a sense of realization in Beth that the world is no longer full of "grays and browns," but that it has "become a more colorful world" for her now that she can cope with her past (Rivera).

Additionally, Beth has never cared about fame. She only cares about the beauty of the game. For her, chess "can also be *beautiful*" because it has given her the opportunity to find herself and to understand her purpose in life (00:14:12-00:14:18). Instead of going to The White House and choosing a life of fame, she instead takes a walk down the street. She comes to a corner full of tables of men playing chess (01:03:33). They immediately recognize her, shaking her hand and calling out to the others, "Harmon! Elizabeth Harmon!" (01:03:44-01:03:56). She continues to smile and shakes all of their hands, but Beth does not care about the recognition. She just *loves* chess. The group of men separate for a split second, revealing a man sitting alone at a table

(01:04:14). He gestures towards the seat and Beth sits down (01:04:15-01:04:18). She takes off her gloves as the camera shows a close up of her face and smile (01:04:28-01:04:35). "Sygrayem," she says as she stares into the camera (01:04:42). The Russian word for "let's play" represents Beth's true win. Although she will forever be known as the World Champion, her true accomplishment, her ability to live amongst the trauma that she endured as a child, reaches far more than the sixty-four squares that she has lived within for so long. She is the queen, and not just the queen of chess, but the queen of her life story and her future narrative.

Although *The Queen's Gambit* ends here and does not show what Beth's future life looks like after she has learned to live with her trauma, viewers have the pleasure of imagining potential future scenarios for a happy Beth who now lives in Freud's state of "healthy mourning" rather than battling the repetition compulsion and all the self-destructive tendencies that stem from traumatic neurosis. *The Queen's Gambit* presents Beth's battle with the repetition compulsion through repeated flashback sequences in which Beth *repeats* her childhood trauma in an unhealthy, melancholic way. The struggle to understand how and why her trauma occurred, as well as if her mother's madness will project into her own life, influences the continuance of Beth's addiction to drugs and alcohol. As the series progresses and as Beth is confronted by two of her friends, she realizes that her mother's mental state does not have to be reflective of her own choices and actions. This realization leads her to understand the importance of consciously confronting and dealing with her childhood trauma, instead of avoiding it from the high of tranquilizers. Beth eventually overcomes her traumatic neurosis, identity crisis, and addiction within the final episode of the series as she takes down the previous world champion, Vasily Borgov, proving that she is not only the queen of chess, but also the captain of her own future.

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Death Note: An Analysis of Justice and Morality

Aven Sanders

Social Contract Theory is a basic philosophical principle that many students learn in high school, specifically the version presented by John Locke. In his adaptation of the theory, Locke establishes that a citizen of a nation or state has agreed to uphold its laws and do right by its people in exchange for protection of their natural rights (which are ordained, in this example, by God). This is the concept that many modern societies were founded on, and thus it is the mission of such societies to uphold and honor this unspoken contract. The individual citizen in this context is responsible for using the moral teachings of their superiors to dictate their decisions alongside the personal virtues and guiding principles instilled by familial, educational, and religious connections. All of these factors help to mold a person's innate sense of justice, established and defended by psychological and philosophical components learned over time. This is especially true in the context of the Japanese manga *Death Note*, which follows the individual pursuits of "justice" by the anti-hero, Light Yagami, and his foils.

Justice has a multitude of definitions in hundreds of dictionaries. In embarking on this research journey, I have attempted to synthesize a few of these definitions into the most basic form possible and conclude that justice is simply the act of being just. This definition is improper, of course, as definitions should never include the word being defined. That being said, this is something that was extremely common when looking at the various definitions of justice. Though the improper definition was a trend, every source had different ways of defining justice, which leads me to conclude that every person will have different ideas, motivations, and methods for "being just" – there is no clear way to define these complex and unique sets of behaviors in a way that effectively encompasses all of them. Even renowned philosophers had difficulty agreeing on the foundations of justice. According to Mark LeBar, Adam Smith believed that a person who behaves justly is not doing so for the betterment of society, but to fulfill some sort of self-serving purpose and the innate human necessity for community. Though Jean-Jacques Rousseau concurred with this theory, Immanuel Kant held certain notions that indicated a more political motive for pursuing justice, namely the establishment of private property and social contracts – connecting to and expanding upon Locke's Social Contract Theory (LeBar 54-55). In the context of *Death Note*, we see this exact notion of justice enacted by the anti-hero, Light Yagami. In his mission to rid the

world of evil, he is attempting to serve his society by eliminating the people that he believes are creating problems within it. The same concept of justice is seen within L and his successors, who act as Light's foils. L, Mello, and Near are all detectives that are known for their intellectual ability and skill, and though they are usually okay with making assumptions and sacrifices, they are not comfortable with the large-scale murder plot that Light has enacted. The differences in thoughts and actions raise the question of what the defining factor is that separates the methods by which these forces attempt to achieve justice. Based on principles in philosophy, psychology, and religion, I intend to find these foundational differences.

In modern parenting, children are taught foundational principles in morality via the "crime and punishment" method, usually applied as a time-out or loss of a beloved toy for a period of time. This method is effective because, in most cases, a child that does something wrong will learn not to repeat the behaviors after being punished for it. The key to making this method effective is an explanation of the wrong action and defining why it was wrong so that, as the brain develops, these foundational principles are expanded upon and develop into an individualized sense of morality. According to Jeffrey Nevid, this personal belief in what morality is and how it is defined is known in psychology as the superego. This is usually depicted in the media as the "angel on the shoulder," more commonly known as the conscience, and is typically based on the lessons that we learn as children. What could happen, though, if one child does not experience the same level of punishment as another? We can gauge from simple observation that children who experience too much punishment or strict rearing methods can become reserved and self-contained, typically choosing to stay out of the way and avoid attention while practicing self-sufficiency to avoid being burdensome or attention-seeking (413-415). Therefore, it can be assumed that a child who does not experience any particular form of punishment is not going to feel as much pressure to conform to standards and expectations that do not align with their personal agenda.

The positive extreme of the superego spectrum is enforced by Plato, who authored a dialogue describing why Socrates believed he ought to face death for his crimes against the state. Though the leaders and guards themselves were willing to let his friends smuggle him out of prison, he opted to stay because he believed that he deserved to die. In Socrates's eyes, the gods and the citizens of Athens had willed his death, and it would be wrong for him to defy that will (6). In the dialogue, he explains that although philosophers may wish to end their own lives after his death, this would be inappropriate because "....it is not unreasonable to hold that no man has the right to

take his own life, but that he must wait until God sends some necessity upon him, as has now been sent upon me" (qtd. in Plato, 6). Socrates is explaining here that a person's life should not end of their own volition, but as a result of some divine signal from the gods themselves indicating that their time on this plane is over. This belief, which is guided by ideas of divine will, is a perfect example of how the superego can guide one's actions and beliefs in any given situation. While most would want to do everything in their power to escape death, Socrates's belief in the gods and their will encourages him to stay in prison and face his sentence, even though that is not the true will of the people. As with any spectrum, however, there is always a negative extreme to be considered – *Death Note* demonstrates this. Light Yagami is determined to use the Death Note as a way of playing God, regardless of risk or consequence, and pursues this under the guise (and, at some points, the genuine belief) of acting in the interest of society. As L familiarizes himself with the case and studies Light's actions, he concludes, "These [murders] are not acts of God, but someone very childish and immature that wants to *pretend* they're God" (Episode 9, 7:09). As shown by this statement alone, it is evident that L has good reason for being considered the greatest detective in the world. His appalled response to the murder of criminals reflects the moral teachings instilled in him by Watari in his childhood, as we learn in "Renewal" (Episode 26). While L grew up in an orphanage having all of his cognitive and emotional needs met by Watari and his peers, Light grew up in a household with a father that worked on the police force. Based on Aizawa's struggles with parenting throughout the series, it can be assumed that Soichiro Yagami was around enough to show him his belief in justice, but not to teach him what justice truly means. Therefore, Light seems to have developed an oversimplified view of justice without a truly ironclad idea of how that ought to be carried out. He even tells Ryuk in the first episode that his reasoning for punishing criminals is only tenuously based in a belief in justice and is rather a result of boredom, which can possibly be credited to an inflated sense of self-importance instilled by the endless praise of his intellect from his parents. In Japanese culture, it is not uncommon for emotional needs to go unrecognized – based on a personal interview with student Riko Hotei, I have concluded that Japan values intellect and workforce potential over emotional fulfillment and comfort. It could be because of this gap in development that Light buys into a very skewed idea of justice, alongside basic principles being instilled at a young age with little elaboration on how these beliefs should be applied. Due to an inflated sense of self-importance, he believes that he has somehow been given the divine right to rule over this "new world" he plans to create, when in reality Ryuk allowed

his notebook to fall to the human world as a result of his own boredom (Episode 1, 16:32). Most people that were brought up under modern parenting styles develop critical thinking skills to evaluate and assemble the many components that make up the superego and will oftentimes avoid falling into extremes, but as demonstrated by Socrates and Light, it is not unreasonable to consider the results of these extremes -- in fact, it could be argued that investigating this concept is necessary to encourage the betterment of society. Understanding the root causes of these belief systems is fundamental to understanding and encouraging positive growth and development of all children, especially if neglecting these principles can mean the loss of innocent lives later on.

One factor that must be considered when analyzing morality in any context is culture. In America, many people hold religious beliefs in high regard and make major (often inaccurate) assumptions about others based on these foundational beliefs. In Japan, this is not so – in fact, it is extremely inappropriate to ask or assume one's religion. I discovered this fact in a personal interview with an exchange student, Riko Hotei, as mentioned previously. This interview gave me some insight into her culture and beliefs from only a few questions and, despite the mild language barrier, I feel that we had an understanding of each other that produced some interesting conversation. It was difficult at first to encourage her to elaborate on her ideas: apparently, Japanese schools teach their students to avoid being long-winded, and she indicated to me that people in America are sometimes overly talkative and take more time engaging in conversation than people in Japan. However, when I began digging into her beliefs and customs, she seemed more willing to open up. We had a brief conversation about morality, specifically in regard to *Death Note*, in which I asked her if she believed the story would have been different if it took place in another country. Her answer was simple: "No matter where you are in the world, basic morals are the same." She also noted that the criminals that Light eliminated were not always criminals because they chose to be – there are systemic issues that turn people into criminals or make them more likely to commit criminal acts, including education and social status. This is true on a global scale, as we know that humans are willing to do almost anything to ensure their own survival (established by the Freudian principle of the id). If a person feels threatened enough by complacency, they will do what they feel is necessary for self-preservation, even if it means breaking the law. Of course, there are exceptions to the rule: people like Light Yagami who are merely bored by the prospect of not having something to challenge themselves or provide entertainment and find that committing crimes is somehow an acceptable way to fulfill these

desires. With people like this in the world, is there even an effective way to eliminate the possibility of crime in the first place? The French Parliament certainly believed so. According to Human Rights Watch in *Preempting Justice: Counterterrorism Laws and Procedures in France*, national leaders believed that establishing special sects of the justice system would be the best way to combat terroristic threats and the dangers that they caused. However, it seemed that an issue was presented with the establishment of these sects: the allowance for preemptive action against potential perpetrators. With allowances for preemptive justice, there was no concrete regulation for obtaining and acting on probable cause or evidence and, while the French justice system is not exactly the same as the American or Japanese, these principles are still fundamental to ensuring a fair execution of justice. Without them, there is no way to ensure that a system is truly just. This must have been considered by the government, as this system was later modified in an attempt to prevent egregious errors and potential wrongful prosecution, but this system (as it is with many) is far from perfect (10-13). So, again, one must ponder how to address the issue of stopping crimes before they happen. As Hotei previously suggested, one way to fix this issue could be to address social disparities, namely between classes. How could one do this? The best way could be to address it via economic reform.

Karl Marx was a man not largely known for work in philosophy, but his ideas about economics alone could very well make him one of the most brilliant philosophical minds of the modern era. His ideas about the economy and how it ought to function can be largely attributed to his sense of morality and his beliefs of how people should be treated. In *Das Kapital*, he spends several pages agonizing over the value of goods and services by breaking down expenses and attempting to formulate a concrete way to calculate the value of labor itself. In his discussion of the capitalist system, Marx explains that consumerism is cyclical, as the production and consumption of goods will inevitably lead to the reselling and repurposing of them (15-35). It should therefore be considered that goods and services have a sort of longevity to them that exists beyond the bounds of their initial production and retail. It could be argued, then, that the value of labor goes beyond the simple cost of material and effort but can extend to the potential repurposing of these products. Marx, however, does not attempt to explore this concept: in the 1950s, when the work was originally published, simply compensating workers for their labor seemed unthinkable to many capitalists. In his mind, capitalism was only meant to be a temporary system, built to last humanity through the evolutionary periods of minimal technology and resources until we had the

ability to produce enough food, hygiene, and security-related products to sustain the entire human race. These ideas are summarized and expanded upon by Donald van de Veer in his article entitled "Marx's View of Justice." As stated previously, Marx was no conventional philosopher, but van de Veer makes a very valid point in his discussion in that he believed that Marx's economic theory reflected his thoughts on justice and philosophy, therefore making it absurd to imply that he was not in any way justicially or philosophically inclined (366). It can be assumed that, if social disparities are the root cause of injustice, the fair and equitable distribution of wealth can alleviate these causes and therefore prevent future issues. In the cases made for the preemptive approach to justice, Marx has seemingly come the closest to developing a plan for how best to handle a situation that can truly have no clear-cut answer.

Contradictory to the notion of fair and equitable treatment, there is the notion of subjugation and fear. The Code of Hammurabi, dating back to approximately 1750 B.C.E., contends with the latter. As with the French approach to preemptive justice, this code seems to rely heavily on fear-mongering its followers into submission as most of the laws are punishable by death or actions that could lead to it. The very first law of the Code states that "If any one ensnare another, putting a ban upon him, but he can not prove it, then he that ensnared him shall be put to death" (qtd. by King). This seems an extreme approach by modern standards, but truly, ancient civilizations did not see death as a consequence of such finality. Nonetheless it can only be assumed that, while this may not have totally eliminated crime, the Code of Hammurabi could have had a hand in largely preventing acts of violent and non-violent crime due to the severity of the punishment. This could only be true, of course, if there was evidence that the code was actually being enacted by the court, as *Death Note* shows that people are more likely to react out of fear than they are blind obedience. If Light, for example, had merely *threatened* to kill criminals instead of actually doing it, there would have been no dramatic decrease in crime rate. He was intelligent enough to recognize that actions do, in fact, speak louder than words – because Light actually *did* kill criminals, people were more afraid to commit crimes, and he was therefore enacting both preemptive and reactionary methods of justice at the same time. Because the plot of *Death Note* takes place in the modern era rather than thousands of years ago, the universal punishment of criminals via the death penalty was hotly debated, especially when enacted by a vigilante. Still, it is clear to the viewer that this fear mongering was effective and, in the end, a potentially good thing – Matsuda himself attested in the second episode of the series that after only a few weeks of

Kira's killings, global crime rates were decreasing. However, at the end of the manga, the aftermath of Light's death shows that it took less than a year for offenders, petty or otherwise, to resume their criminal behavior in his absence. Without someone to exercise divine punishment over the wicked, the wicked thus continued to reign.

One facet of justice is that it is a very fluid concept subject to generational changes, as demonstrated by the various views discussed previously. Arnold Brecht discusses this in his publication entitled *Relative and Absolute Justice*. He synthesizes many ideas in this piece and describes the transition of justice from a natural order model to divine will to, eventually, a more democratic model. Considering opinions from St. Thomas Aquinas, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and others, Brecht tasks himself with attempting to understand justice itself and classify specific ideas as pertinent to concepts of relative justice or absolute justice. He eventually concludes that, while certain ideas and norms will remain stagnant, justicial values that find their root in morality will continue to fluctuate with the changing times (58-87). For example, consider the abolition of slavery in America. In 1865, abolition was hotly debated among the masses. There was a large number of people that believed in the institution of slavery as a "necessary evil" to maintain a functioning society – regardless of the demeaning and inhumane conditions that these people endured, there was always the excuse of free food and housing as compensation for the horrors and arduous labor that these people endured without compensation. Of course, there was an equal number of abolitionists that wanted to see enslaved people emancipated and others still who wanted slavers to be held accountable for the mistreatment of the enslaved. Because of the fundamental shift in public opinion that occurred as more of the mistreatment was exposed, the defeat of the South in the Civil War, and the re-election of Abraham Lincoln, slavery was officially put to an end in the eyes of the law. This displays the strength of the democratic approach to justice and only exemplifies one way in which the democratic approach to justice has substantially improved the quality of life for those that use it. A century later, the descendants of the enslaved fought for further equality as they were subjected to brutality and injustice at the hands of their peers and superiors, bringing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to fruition. These examples show how, with shifts in morality and the advancement of society, fundamental changes were made to the justice system and the standards to which the enforcement of justice is held. The democratic process in and of itself, therefore, is an example of justice at work. Truly, if a number of people within a society chose to unite for a particular goal, they could have the world at their fingertips:

this is what Karl Marx wished for his people, as did John Locke and Plato. These philosophers believed that justice was ultimately in the hands of the people and that a society united for good would always prevail.

The implications of fundamental shifts in understanding and enforcement of justice are depicted clearly in *Death Note*. Light kills criminals for approximately six consecutive years after coming into possession of the Note, and it took only a few months for the populace to start siding with Kira after these killings began. After L's death, Sakura TV even established a slot for a night-time special titled *Kira's Kingdom*, in which civilians could speak on their adoration for Light's work. This sort of religious following reflects one major aspect of humanity: self-preservation. Though the devotion to Kira was genuine, it likely started as a fear of being the next victim of his wrath. The eighth chapter in *Essentials of Psychology* describes the motivation of behavior, the first of which is instinct. Self-preservation is a basic evolutionary instinct, one that has helped a statistically disadvantaged species prevail over the course of several millennia. Another, slightly less instinctual, motive for devotion to Kira's work could be psychosocial, which would include desires for acceptance and community (Nevid 281-284). If the people surrounding a specific follower of Kira were outwardly disapproving of his work, it would be unlikely for this person to express approval of the killings. However, if the community is outwardly approving, it would encourage individuals to follow the norm of praising and revering the murders with admiration regardless of personal opinions. This could contribute to a conditioning of the mind to perceive the murder of criminals as a good thing, even if it directly contradicts a person's own ideas of justice. One issue that this could cause, however, is something called "stimulus generalization," which is the term describing a difficulty distinguishing between concepts, ideas, or stimuli that share commonalities. For example, if one were to grow up with an overwhelmingly positive view of the ideals and beliefs of Kira but does not learn the characteristics that differentiate these criminals from free, innocent civilians, then this person may begin to believe that murder *in general* is a socially acceptable practice (Nevid 176-180). This would be largely detrimental to traditional values and potentially lead to a sort of revival in sacrificial practices, in extreme cases. More than this, though, it could lead to attempts at replication by these followers – this hypothetical situation is canonized after the end of the *Death Note* manga series.

In the all-in-one special edition print of *Death Note*, there is a bonus chapter after the epilogue dedicated to showing a future owner of the Note attempting to repeat Light's actions. The

only explanation for this behavior was the cult-like following that Light gained in death. With the epilogue taking place a year after Light's death, there is a panel depicting a sort of vigil held by his followers, though it seemed that they had convinced themselves that Kira was simply taking a respite before continuing his mission. This, of course, caused a sort of uproar when the copycat surfaced nine years after his death – these followers hoped that Near's blatant insults would be met with action and that their god had returned. The copycat, whose name is not disclosed, was approximately the same age that Light was when he began murdering criminals, and it seems that this person's intentions included replicating the public and tedious battle of wits between Kira and L. When Near dismissed this attempt, declaring it a sloppy replication, this anticipated battle was brought to an abrupt end and the copycat took his own life with his Death Note (23:57-23:99). The events after his death show that the deification of Light Yagami, though it should be expected in this situation, could impact more than one generation and lead to some sort of religious spectacle.

The implications of religion in *Death Note* are ever-present in the series, though the author claims that these interpretations were unintentional (Ohba Interview). Nonetheless, Tetsuro Araki's creative liberties in creating the animated series emphasize the Christian imagery. The first introduction, which includes a parody of the "Creation of Adam" painting and heavily Christianized depictions of Light and L, is one of the first cues that the viewer could interpret the story as a sort of allegory for Christ. When the viewer is introduced to Light, it is in a scene unique to the anime in which he is asked to translate a passage which reads, "Follow the teachings of God and receive his blessings, and so it shall be that the seas will again become bountiful and the raging storms will subside" (Episode 1, 2:40). After typing this quote into a search engine, I discovered that this was not from any religious text: it was written specifically for the anime and therefore seems to be an early indication of Light's beliefs about religion, which would later be contextualized with how he viewed himself as a godly figure. This is yet another cue for the viewer to pay special attention to other biblical references shown throughout the series alongside its purpose of allowing for an introduction to Light's worldview. In his eyes, the world was rotten – once he came to possess the Death Note, he then had the power to exact his wrath on others, and it took but a few days for him to begin viewing himself as a god. One close reading of the text and analysis of the series, titled "17 Ways *Death Note* Is a Christ Allegory," highlights and explains some of the most prominent moments in which the plot reflects the story of Christ. If the viewer were to consider Light a representation of wrath and vengeance (represented in Christian

mythology by Satan), then it would not be unreasonable to consider L, his foil, a representation of mercy and forgiveness (or, in this case, Christ). In Christian mythology, Satan and Jesus Christ could be considered two sides of the same coin: both borne of the same Heavenly Father, ordained with certain gifts, and sent to Earth for different purposes. While Satan, originally Lucifer, had been disgraced and banished to the earth, Jesus on the other hand had been tasked with being a sort of "sacrificial lamb" to atone for the sins of humanity. Even in the face of death, Jesus did not feel hatred toward the man who had betrayed him – he pleaded with his Father to have mercy on those that crucified him. This benevolence is one of the main attributes that L possesses in the series, especially as depicted in "Silence," the twenty-fifth episode. It is in this installment that L faces his own death, and it seems that he is well aware of his impending demise throughout the episode. At one point, as he stands in the rain, he faces Light and says simply, "Tell me Light, from the moment you were born, has there ever been a point when you've actually told the truth?" This is followed by a beat of total silence, in which the two stare at each other, then Light decides to respond with yet another lie. L seems to have predicted this and, with his hope of honesty seemingly dashed, decides to go inside (Episode 25, 13:00). It is here that the two attempt to dry themselves off after being out in the rain, and L decides to dry Light's feet for him (13:50). This is seemingly a recreation of the New Testament story of Jesus washing the disciples' feet with the knowledge of his own impending death. In this episode, Light would be closer to a representation of Judas, the man who betrayed Jesus and sent him to his death, than Satan – though some Christians could argue that Judas had been influenced or even possessed by the devil himself. It also seems to be no coincidence that, in his investigation, L gathers a total of twelve allies (including Light and Misa) to work under his command, akin to Christ's collection of twelve disciples. After his death, also like Christ, L is "reborn" in Near and Mello's continuation of his work, which begins approximately three and a half years after his death. This is similar to how it is said in Revelations 13:5 that, "The beast was given a mouth to utter words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months" (qtd. in 17 Ways). Not only was Light in total control as Kira after L's death, but he assumed the role of L and continued his blasphemous investigation, thus deceiving every person on the task force and maintaining this unchallenged power. However, in the end, Near and Mello revive L's work and bring Light to justice, as it is said Christ will do in the ultimate battle of good and evil (17 Ways).

The notion of *Death Note* acting as a Christ allegory relates to the analysis of the moral dilemma within it: if Light represents Satan and L represents Christ, it should be very clear which "side" one should take. However, as 100 Word Anime user Karandi points out, this is not such an easy task. She notes in her review that both L and Light have separate but equal intellectual merit, and both are very capable of logical thinking and reasoning their way through situations (Karandi). Because both parties are so intelligent, they essentially have a level playing field and the viewer finds themself rooting for alternating sides. Another component of this could be the relatively modern idea that Lucifer himself was not all bad and, if applied to Light's case, would mean that he deserves sympathy. In my opinion, this is true because both Light and Lucifer were thrown into situations in which they had an amount of power and, in the name of perceived justice, misused it. Both Lucifer and Light attempted to disrupt the "natural order" to advance public perceptions of justice. Lucifer believed that Yaweh, the self-ordained God, held too much power and used it to subjugate the angels. Light, in a similar fashion, believed that criminals held power over the innocent because the trouble that they caused led the innocent to live in a state of fear, even if it was not ever-present. While some may consider this fear a simple fact of life, Light sought to rectify this in an attempt to cleanse a rotten world. Lucifer attempted to overthrow God for the sake of the angels, whom he believed ought to be treated as equals for their work in Heaven and Earth. Both of these characters were acting for the right reasons, at least at first, but simply went about it the wrong way. In Noah Smith's analysis of *Death Note*, published on the Storymaps forum, he discusses the significance of the apple. In my opinion, the symbolism of Light giving the Shinigami Ryuk apples as a means to control him symbolizes his full rebellion against the social conventions and ideas of justice, just as Satan gave the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge to Eve in defiance of God. This exchange, occurring toward the end of the first episode, signifies the beginning of the battle between good and evil, just as in the book of Genesis when Eve eats from the Tree at Satan's behest (Smith).

In the end, there is no clear definition of who is right or wrong in *Death Note*. In contextualizing the series with psychological, philosophical, and religious principles, there is no clear-cut way to define the dilemmas of the series because of their uniqueness to each character. Light Yagami, intelligent in every way except emotionally, is a character led astray by gaining too much power at a young age and experiencing a critical lack of moral guidance. L, who maintained a superior intellect, was given all of the necessary tools to become a well-rounded individual and

thus had a developed and individualized sense of justice, which he used to exercise mercy and unfortunately bring himself to his own death. Both were morally ambiguous in several ways and acted as effective foils to instigate a complex and thought-provoking plot, highlighting a dialogue of justice that has rarely been had in popular culture. This complexity is only highlighted by the facets of academia discussed here. Thus, I would like to conclude with this: just as beauty is in the eye of the beholder, justice is in the eye of the just. There can be no true definition of the concept, because subjectivity will always find a way to negate logic. Times will change, people will evolve, but this fact will remain.

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Samantha Maldonado is originally from Quito, Ecuador and is a second-year Business Administration (HRM) major and Political Science minor at Lindsey Wilson College. She is a member of the R.V. Bennett Honors Program and a Begley Scholar. On campus, she serves as a Resident Assistant. Samantha enjoys traveling, photography, and competing at cycling events.

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Aven Sanders is a first-year English major and Communication minor from Perryville, Kentucky. They are a member of the Lindsey Wilson College Singers and the R.V. Bennett Honors Society and pride themself on their activism with the Kentucky Chapter of the Nationwide Youth Climate Activism Group. Their participation and activism have included creating the House on Fire project that was released in the summer of 2021. They hope to one day become a journalist, with opportunities to travel and write for important causes across the globe.

Landon Simmons is a senior History major and English minor from Campbellsville, Kentucky. He is the 2021-2022 Student Government Association Chief of Staff, an executive board member of the Sigma Tau Delta English Honor Society, and a member of the R.V. Bennett Honors Program. He is also a bass in the Lindsey Wilson College Singers and served as an editor in this edition of the *Alpha Kappa Phi Review*. In his free time Landon enjoys reading in coffee shops, gaming with friends, and going on hikes.

Erica Smith is a senior Secondary English Education major and Spanish minor at Lindsey Wilson College from Greensburg, Kentucky. She is currently a student teacher working with 9th grade students. Her dream is to eventually travel overseas to teach English. She is a member of Sigma Tau Delta and presented a version of the paper published here at the 2022 International Convention in Atlanta. Her hobbies include reading, listening to music, and re-watching shows on Netflix.

Alexandra (Allie) Wilson is a Junior from Russell Springs, Kentucky. She is a Bonner Scholar, Writing Consultant, Sigma Tau Delta executive board member, as well as a member of the R.V. Bennett Honors Program. Allie is majoring in Secondary and Middle English Education. She loves good books, good people, and creating good memories.