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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 journal contains a broad range of student essays. These essays span a wide variety of topics, 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. The reader will find the essays organized thematically, not alphabetically. The first four essays in this volume—by Hannah VanArsdale, Kathryn Brown, Alaina Phelps, and Trevor Stonecypher—discuss works by British authors, spanning the Medieval period to the post-WWII era. While these essays do have a common thread, they explore a wide variety of topics that reflect issues relevant to the time period in which the author was writing. All of the topics discussed in the essays are still widely debated and written about today, such as literary canon formation, gender, labor conditions, and privacy. The next two essays in this volume—by Kaitlyn Jackson and Emma Turner—focus explicitly on gender, but through an historical analysis of women's roles in Medieval and Early Modern Europe and a literary analysis of American author Charlotte Perkins Gilman's contributions to first-wave feminism, respectively. Finally, Emily Wood brings the volume up to the contemporary moment in her close reading of comics in light of Plato's *Republic* and the various movements within the comic genre regarding character development.

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.

—Caitlin Freeny
Editor-in-Chief
April 2018

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The editors would like to thank the following English and History faculty members for serving as Faculty Reviewers for this volume:

Dr. Tim McAlpine
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Critical essays in the Humanities, broadly defined as the fields of English, History, Women's Studies, Philosophy, Theology, Theatre, Film, 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.

The Gawain-Poet's *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*:
The Most Epic of Romances and the Most Romantic of Epics

Hannah VanArsdale

Throughout the centuries, many writers have been daunted by the task of creating the most intricate of poems: those with the greatest of heroes, the highest of stakes, the vilest of foes, and the largest of scopes. These stories of the highest grandeur were loved and admired by many as they were passed down from generation to generation, as oral tradition for many centuries. Over time, the genre was officially given a name, one that would signify both the herculean nature of the subject matter as well as the formidability of the writers themselves: the epic. Many poems were deemed worthy of such a title. However, some poems seemed to insight split views and interpretations. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is one of these poems. The late 14th-century poem begins on New Year's Eve, with the Green Knight unexpectedly visiting King Arthur's court and challenging King Arthur and his knights to play a deadly game: to strike him with an axe, if he can return the blow in a year and a day. Sir Gawain accepts on the King's behalf, beheading the Knight, who proceeds to pick up his dismembered head and remind Sir Gawain of the terms for the game. Once it reaches autumn, Sir Gawain leaves Camelot to find the Knight, eventually finding a castle owned by Lord Bertilak, who offers him a place to stay until he leaves to fulfill his promise to the Green Knight. During his stay, Lord Bertilak's Wife attempts to seduce Sir Gawain, who vows to exchange any winnings earned with Lord Bertilak, except he does not share a magical girdle, one that could prevent the wearer from dying. The culminating battle with the Green Knight consists of two false swings and a nick on Sir Gawain's neck. The Green Knight is revealed to be Lord Bertilak and since Sir Gawain showed loyalty during his stay but went back on his word on the third day when he kept the magic girdle, Sir Gawain returns to Camelot with shame, wearing the girdle on his arm as a reminder of his shortcomings. Despite this, he is welcomed by King Arthur and the other Knights with open arms—all wearing girdles on their arms as well. Despite its similarities to other epics, it is typically interpreted as more of a romance due to the inclusion of chivalric ideals and a sense of romance between Sir Gawain and Bertilak's Wife. Rather than simply falling into the category of an epic or a romance, however, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* uses characteristics of both genres to tell of Sir Gawain's strife with the Green Knight.

When it comes to whether or not *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* can be considered an epic, we must first understand what constitutes an epic. An epic poem, in the broadest of terms, is a long narrative poem that tells of an otherworldly hero with superhuman-like qualities and details the grueling trials and tribulations of said hero over a long period of time. Other common characteristics of an epic include a moral or theme and supernatural forces at play, as well as an invocation of a Muse in order to gain the inspiration and the words to tell or record the tale. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* incorporates epic traits which are seen in well-established epics such as *Beowulf*, *The Canterbury Tales*, and *The Faerie Queene*. All of these epic poems cover an extended length of time. Beowulf's tale spans "fifty years" (Heaney line 1770), while *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* takes a little over a year for the whole story to come to fruition. Each of the epics teaches the morals and ethics of its time period. *The Faerie Queene* focuses on the Christian virtues and conducts. For example, the Redcrosse Knight acts as a representation of holiness and King Arthur acts as magnificence. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* focuses on Sir Gawain's adherence to knightly chivalry and conduct despite multiple temptations in multiple forms (Robertson). Each tale deals with the supernatural in some form. For example, in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* the Green Knight's decapitated head speaks to Sir Gawain, and in *The Canterbury Tales*, the Wife of Bath tells a story where a woman can shift from appearing as an old hag to a beautiful maiden. All four of these poems contain a hero with exaggerated qualities of strength or honor: Beowulf in his titular epic, the Knight in *The Canterbury Tales*, Arthur in *The Faerie Queene*, and Sir Gawain in his titular work.

The epic is a genre that has defined characteristics yet is lenient regarding just how many of these characteristics are required to fully qualify. For instance, some traits common in epics and contained in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* may not appear in another recognized epic. Common to epic is a romance – established or newly formed – between the hero and another person. Thus, Sir Gawain being pursued by Bertilak's Wife can qualify as a convention of epic, although other prominent epics like *Beowulf* do not have a love interest of any sort. Conforming to the classic conventions of epic, *The Faerie Queene* starts *in medias res,* (in the middle of things, or in the middle of the action), throwing the readers into Redcrosse Knight's journey without explanation. Yet, *Canterbury*, *Beowulf*, and *Sir Gawain* do not start *in medias res*, but rather begin with exposition and then later introducing us to the plot and the journey of the protagonist(s). Epics tend to have an invocation to a Muse, which *The Faerie Queene* does, yet *Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain*

do not. Clearly, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* falls under many categories that are deemed crucial for the epic poem yet falters in others. Still, with this reasoning, it is understandable why this work can be interpreted as an epic.

Many critics, however, choose to view *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* through a more romantic lens. The term "Romance" refers to a particular genre of literature that was prevalent throughout the medieval and early modern era, which featured characteristics such as a battle of epic proportions, triumph over evil, mystical elements within the world encompassing the story, and – as the name would suggest – a romantic conquest. Many of these romances also tend to idealize a code of chivalry and honor, an attribute that was popularized by the tales of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. Literary critic Cory James Rushton states that this poem "…has caused other medieval romances (particularly Arthurian romances) to suffer in comparison with itself," as if this poem dictates the necessary properties of the Arthurian Romance genre (174). He asserts that "*Sir Gawain* has few of the generic markers of…romance (a successful love affair; a battle; a triumphant return to court, often with the antagonist in tow)," all of which Rushton lists as inverted versions of the typical tropes (175). *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* challenges all of these conventions of romance, twisting them in a way that still allows the poem to fall under these categories while also demonstrating slight differences between them and the characteristics described. Derek Brewer comments upon how *Sir Gawain* "[has] taken the traditional romance story-pattern in which a young man is tested and grows to maturity, and, in a sense, reversed it," playing on what a romance is supposed to contain and how the romance should develop (154). The unknown Gawain-Poet adjusts the conventions to make a poem that does not simply reflect one genre's characteristics. As Cecilia Hatt states in her book, *God and the Gawain-Poet: Theology and Genre in Pearl, Cleanness, Patience and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the poem "adopts as many romance motifs and structures as possible in order to furnish itself with reminiscences of stories that will already be familiar," which implies that the story was written with what was popular and familiar at the time in mind, rather than an eye to conforming rigidly to either genre (171-172).

The first marker that Rushton introduces is the "successful love affair" of the Romantic Hero. The "love affair" between Sir Gawain and Bertilak's Wife, however, was more of a temptation for Sir Gawain than a possible romantic rendezvous. Sir Gawain is pursued by Bertilak's Wife while he is staying with Bertilak. She comes to Sir Gawain's room each of the

three days Bertilak goes to hunt, which gives her the chance to seduce the knight. This is an inversion of traditional courtly love, in which the hero tries to gain the affections of his potential female love interest. The first day, Bertilak's Wife asks for a kiss, to which Sir Gawain agrees, saying, "I shall kiss at your command, as becomes a knight, / and further, should it please you, so press me no more," which shows both his romantic feelings towards Bertilak's Wife, as well as his dedication to his knighthood, since he was initially willing to amuse her, but only once (1303-1304). He did accept two kisses from her the second day, but the third day, he accepted three kisses and her girdle. She convinces him to take her magic girdle – which would protect him from a fatal blow – and "he granted her wish and she gave with good grace / though went on to beg him not to whisper a word / of this gift to her husband," to which Sir Gawain agreed, taking both the magical girdle and the final kiss (1861-1863). Alan Markman claims that Sir Gawain's "acceptance of the Lady's lace, of course, is the most notable incident in the romance which illustrates his humanity," rather than Sir Gawain being placed on a proverbial pedestal upon which the rest of the knights put him (578). This act shows that Sir Gawain is not a flawless character, but rather one that has faults that must be overcome. Sir Gawain's acceptance of the girdle acts as a turning point in the narrative, whereas he merely accepted the kisses from Lord Bertilak's Wife but kept the girdle in anticipation for his upcoming duel with the Green Knight.

Also, in the sense of romance, Sir Gawain can either be seen to have a literal romance with Bertilak's Wife or a figurative romance with his sense of chivalry and knighthood. From the very beginning of the poem, we can see Sir Gawain's dedication to serve his king. In the face of the Green Knight's proposal to King Arthur, Sir Gawain insists that he is "…weakest of [Arthur's] warriors and feeblest of wit; / loss of my life would be least lamented," and that he should take Arthur's place in the beheading game (354-355). Despite his personal claims, Sir Gawain is referred to as the "noblest knight" and that he is "devoid of vices," although this last title is later proven false by Gawain himself (634, 639). The Green Knight (Bertilak) later explains to Sir Gawain that he lacks loyalty, not due to any misdoings or sins he has committed while staying in his company, but because Sir Gawain "loved [his] own life," which caused him to falter on his promise both to Bertilak and to the knightly code of conduct and honor that governs his life (2368). This is a reference to the magical girdle that Bertilak's Wife gave him. Sir Gawain betrayed the original deal with Bertilak, which was that both men would exchange the winnings they would earn throughout the day. Instead, he chose to honor Bertilak's Wife's wishes to not let her husband

know about the girdle and he also chose to keep the girdle for himself to keep himself safe during his "duel" with the Green Knight.

The second marker of a romance, as indicated by Rushton, is a "battle" between the hero and the antagonist. However, no true battle takes place in *Sir Gawain*. Instead, there is the "Beheading Game" that the mysterious Green Knight proposes: anyone brave enough can strike him once – in the neck – with his axe, then in one year and a day that person must meet him and be prepared to receive a blow of the same force (285-300). This is not exactly what one would have in mind in regard to a knightly duel to the death. Instead of a true "battle," it is treated more as a literal game by the knight. There are set rules established by the Green Knight to make it fair, even having Sir Gawain produce a verbal contract, that he "heave this axe, and whatever happens after, / in twelvemonth's time I'll be struck in return…", as if to verify their deal and create a sense of trust between the two parties involved (382-383). Even a year and a day later, Sir Gawain met with the Green Knight to uphold his part of the bargain. This "duel" consisted of two misses of the axe, the third strike "skewed to one side, just skimming the skin," to represent the three tests of Sir Gawain's character those three days in Bertilak's care (2312). Ultimately, there was no true duel between the two. The blows were discussed beforehand and both men kept to their word of one blow to the neck.

The third mentioned marker of a romance is the "triumphant return" of the Romantic Hero. Gawain's return to Arthur's court was a lonesome, almost pitiful return. While he had gained a token – the green girdle from Bertilak's Wife –he had lost something more important to him: his honor or "loyalty." Loyalty to one's king or lord was crucial for knighthood. As Markman states, "[l]oyalty…was the keystone of the entire feudal structure…. Had [Sir Gawain] not been loyal to Arthur and Bertilak, had he not been a man of his word, the structure of the romance would have collapsed" (578). This implies that this sense of loyalty is also detrimental to the romance genre. Sir Gawain's loyalty strays, which causes him to go against his promise to Bertilak. This disloyalty leads to him receiving a blow from the Green Knight's axe. Sir Gawain "forgot / the freedom and fidelity every knight knows to follow," which resulted in shame for his actions (2380-2381). When Sir Gawain returns full of regret and shame, he is greeted by King Arthur and the other Knights of the Round Table, all of whom outwardly show support for Sir Gawain's actions. His return is met with open arms despite his apparent failure of the Green Knight's challenge. Markman states that "One of the marks of genius in the romance is the deliberate care which the Gawain-Poet took to

make his hero human," which allows the Gawain-Poet to draw attention to Sir Gawain's faults and misgivings and present them in the light for both the readers and Sir Gawain himself (578). Sir Gawain's arrival is not one of triumph in the usual sense. A hero's triumph is typically pictured as something to celebrate; something to signify an amazing achievement; the "triumph" he experienced was the support his fellow knights, and the learning experience he had from the Green Knight's challenge. Gawain learns from his mistake, proclaiming that he "will drape [the girdle] across my chest till the day I die," as a constant reminder of the day(s) he gave into temptation, putting his core values and his sense of loyalty and honor aside (2510).

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is not purely an epic because it contains more romantic elements than a standard epic. The hero is not as grandiose as the typical epic hero, but he is portrayed in a more human light through his actions and his pursuits of Bertilak's Wife. It is also not a pure romance, since Rushton's definition of a romance seems to only apply in certain circumstances, and even then, only partially. With *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, we see a poem that blends the genres of epic and romance into one work. Clare Kinney claims that the Gawain-Poet "derives from his willingness to 'defamiliarize' the conventional […] to re-examine […] assumptions about how certain common-places of romance should guide their understanding of his narrative" (457). In other words, Kinney is stating that the piece was written with the idea in mind to play with the conventions of romance. This piece crosses genres, implementing key characteristics of both the epic and romance, especially in terms of shared characteristics between these two genres. Although we tend to view and categorize genres in black and white, this is one situation where it is a mixture, a gray combination of both. The Gawain-Poet blends the two genres perfectly, leaving a very faint line where the epic qualities end and the romantic qualities begin—a line that he or she was brave enough to cross.

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"We're All Born Naked:" Boy Actors, The Construction of Gender, and Female Crossdressing in Shakespeare's Early Comedies

Kathryn Brown

As we move further into the twenty-first century, discussions of gender and gender identity have come to the forefront of our society. With the growing societal normalization of intersectional feminist theory and doctrine, discussions of gender, sexuality, and the expressions thereof have also become more commonplace. The concept of gender ambiguity and the social construction of gender are becoming widely accepted schools of thought in academic circles and even within our mainstream media. The visibility and acceptance of transgender and non-gender-conforming individuals—along with the expansion of expected gender roles to include a broader range of identities—is one of the landmark developments of feminism in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Specifically, the societally accepted ways in which gender is outwardly constructed through clothing and physical appearance have drastically shifted over the last one hundred years or so. Most people no longer blink twice at a woman in pants or at a man with long hair. The lines between what constitute societally acceptable male and female expressions of gender are being blurred, year after year. This is not to say that there are not still expectations and standards to which individuals are expected to conform, only that those standards are broadening and encompassing a wider variety of individuals and identities. In 2016, even with these advancements in acceptance of gender expressions, our mainstream media made a decision that shocked me: *RuPaul's Drag Race* (a reality competition for male drag queens) won a Primetime Emmy for outstanding programming.

I am still struck, in a way, by this acceptance of drag culture into mainstream media and the beginning stages of the normalization of the concept of performative crossdressing. Of course, drag still carries many negative social connotations and perceptions based upon the homophobic and transphobic rhetoric of certain societal circles. Even with the broad strides that have been made toward the acceptance of multiple expressions of gender identity in our society, deliberate and convincing instances of crossdressing have remained one of the areas that tend to make many individuals uncomfortable. Rampant fear of and discomfort with transgender and gender non-conforming individuals is evident within the political and social landscape surrounding Title IX legislative reform, popular media exposure, and the introduction of high-profile "Bathroom Bills"

within various state legislative systems across the United States. With that being said, it's worth asking, how exactly *did* RuPaul manage to win an Emmy? Modern drag culture seems unique in its exemption from the same kind of cultural scrutiny in that it is purely an exhibitionist, performative form of crossdressing, rather than an intentionally disguised form of crossdressing. As a spectator, one is *meant* to know and understand that they are watching a man in drag, and it is this knowledge, the irony of the stage, that provides individuals the space to appreciate and enjoy its comedic form from a distance. For some reason, this performative, theatrical act of crossdressing appears to be more palatable for mainstream society than the type of crossdressing in which transgender or genderfluid individuals might participate to convey their gender identity. This begs the question: what is the difference? In what instance is crossdressing meant to be noticed, and in which is it meant to be hidden? How do we delineate between the two? Is there something about comedy and the theatre that helps to mitigate that difference?

Through examining the early works of Shakespeare, I noticed that many of these same questions of gender identity and outward expressions of gender that our postmodern society wrestles with were being addressed on the sixteenth-century stage through Shakespeare's comedic heroines. Specifically, we see this exhibited in his comedies through the act of disguised female to male crossdressing. While the goals and aims of Shakespeare's comedic heroines are different from many of the goals of modern instances of crossdressing (both theatrical and practical), there's still much that can be gained from analyzing these characters and the historical implications of their disguised displays of gender in context with our twenty-first century attitudes toward the construction of gender and gender identity. In this essay, I intend to explore the societal implications of three instances of female crossdressing in Shakespeare's *As You Like It, Twelfth Night,* and *The Merchant of Venice.* Along with a historical overview of female crossdressing in Elizabethan and Jacobean society, I will explore some of the ways in which Rosalind, Viola, and Portia embody issues of gender, sexuality, class, and female autonomy through their male disguises.

Before diving into an analysis of the female characters in question, it is first important to establish some of the historical context surrounding the history of female crossdressing during Shakespeare's active years. In Renaissance England, the societal fear of hermaphrodites—the transitory person who is neither wholly male or wholly female—stemmed from the "inward and invisible mystery of the sexes" (Stone 2) perceived by the general populace in which there was no

clear definition of what constitutes one's gender identity aside from physical appearance. Without an advanced understanding of DNA and female and male biological makeup, the question of the tangible difference between men and women relied completely on one's outward performative expression of gender through behavior and appearance. One of the primary ways of crafting an individual's identity was through adherence to the understood rules and laws of gender (and class) specific clothing.

Beginning as early as the mid-fourteenth century, England has record of various pieces of sumptuary legislation that shaped the way that individuals were permitted to dress and present themselves. According to Kirtio, sumptuary legislation can be defined as "a set of regulations, passed down by legislators through statutory law and parliamentary proclamation, that sought to regulate society by dictating what contemporaries could own or wear based on their position within society" (17). This legislation not only affected expressions of wealth and class, but also, more specifically, gender. Under the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, there was particular societal concern over "the inordinate excess in apparel" and subsequent "moral decline" of the nobility and lower classes of England. In response to this public unrest, extensive legislation known as the *Acts of Apparel* were passed to dictate what each class level and gender were permitted to wear in order to maintain and preserve individuals' "station and moral character" (Kirtio 16-24). Citing Deuteronomy 22:5, Puritan leaders led the charge in developing and pushing for this legislation, speaking against instances of gendered cross-dressing in that "woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God" (*The Bible*, Deut. 22.5). This viewpoint fixes those who would transcend gendered norms through clothing as rebels against the prescribed biblical authority of gender-appropriate fashioning. Stone writes that "clothing signals one's substantive adherence to the written laws of sex, which purport to keep men and women whole in themselves and the difference between them clear and unconfused" (2). Women who dared to cross these gendered boundaries were at risk of being labeled as deviant members of society who fell into that "abominable hermaphrodite" archetype.

Michael Shapiro discusses at length additional cultural implications of female crossdressing in his book, *Gender in Play on the Shakespearean Stage*. According to Shapiro, the perceived connection between crossdressing and illicit sexual relationships (specifically the stigma of prostitution) in English society at large was amplified and used as leverage to justify the

sumptuary laws that made gendered crossdressing illegal during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I and King James I. Both men and women who were caught wearing the opposite gender's apparel were treated as sex offenders in the English legal system, regardless of whether there was any evidence to suggest that they were actually involved in any illicit sexual activity. Motivation for dressing in male attire surely may have included situations tied to prostitution, criminal activity, and extramarital affairs, but more likely, crossdressing was often an avenue for women to gain greater mobility, safety, and economic freedom within their society. Women of the aristocracy had much more freedom to dabble in the realm of male attire as a passing fad because their social status provided a level of protection against errant allegations of prostitution that working-class women simply did not have. Even if a woman was not formally charged with sexual misconduct or prostitution, she still ran the risk of being permanently stigmatized as being guilty of other forms of sexual "depravity," specifically being overly-aggressive and flamboyant in her sexuality and thus taking a "male" role in her relationships (Shapiro 15-22).

This idea that outward expressions of gender and class, specifically achieved through clothing, have a direct effect on one's individual gender identity was the prevailing point of view among Renaissance society. Greenblatt unpacks this concept in his major work, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare.* The term "self-fashioning" is used to describe the process of constructing one's identity and public persona through behavior and appearance according to a set of socially acceptable standards. Greenblatt writes that "self-fashioning involves submission to an absolute power or authority situated at least partially outside the self—God, a sacred book, an institution such as church, court, colonial or military administration" (9). It is through these institutions that the standards of appearance and power are established. A woman who wore men's clothing was, in effect, becoming a man in many ways, venturing dangerously close to the identity of hermaphroditic abomination by choosing to fashion the self in such a way that highlighted masculine qualities. These same expectations were held for outward expressions of class. A peasant who wore silk blurred the lines of the aristocracy. With The delicate balance between the concepts of male and female, and lower and upper class, identity was easily complicated and blurred by the act of crossdressing and the power inherent in the concept of self-fashioning. Crossdressing calls into question the societal definition of gender and class. If simply wearing a doublet could transform a woman's role into one of masculinity (Shapiro 22), what was it that truly

separated men from women? If anyone could obtain velvets and silks, who was to say who rightfully belonged to the upper echelon?

These questions were even further complicated through gendered and class-based expressions in the realm of theatre. It wasn't until after the year 1660, following the downfall of Cromwell's Puritanical government, that women were allowed to perform in public, theatrical spaces in England (Orgel 11). The theatrical troupe of Shakespeare's stage, and of all Renaissance stages, consisted exclusively of an all-male cast, meaning that all of Shakespeare's written female characters were originally performed by young men. In effect, every play with a female character embodied an instance of gendered crossdressing during performance. This is complicated even further in the works of Shakespeare in which those female characters are taking on male disguises. In these works, the audiences would not only have been seeing a female character dressed as a man, but also a boy actor playing a woman playing a man. In this way, the ambiguity and fluidity of gender and class were embraced and, arguably, celebrated on Shakespeare's early stage in a way that was not socially accepted by the conventional religious doctrine of Renaissance society. Something about the sacred, liminal space of the theatre created a sort of double mirror that mitigated and allowed for the rules and confines of traditional expressions of gender and class to be broken. By creating a deliberate and purposeful artifice of the theatre, actors and playwrights were able to explore and exploit the construction of gender in regard to societal construction.

Some of Shakespeare's contemporary critics criticized the public spectacle of crossdressing in relation to the sensationalized "practice of transvestism as institutionalized in the theater" (Stone 3), especially in relation to the implicit sexual objectification of the young men playing Shakespeare's comedic heroines. James Stone writes about the portrayal of these actors and disguised heroines in his work *Crossing Gender in Shakespeare*. He argues that a latent homosexual desire may have been invoked in male audience members when they witnessed romantic relationships played out between the leading male actors and their romantic counterparts who were portrayed by boys in drag. The possibility that audience members were given a public and sanctioned space in which they may find the cross-dressed boys more attractive than their conventional marriage partners raised questions not only of gender expression but also of heteronormativity within English society. These questions clearly challenged the biblical precedent of strict gender identities and roles as well as expectations of heterosexuality among the general population. However, that was the nature of theatrical cross-dressing. The acts of

crossdressing that Shakespeare's boy actors participated in were much more akin to the performative, exhibitionist crossdressing of the modern drag scene than that of the disguised, secretive crossdressing of Shakespeare's female heroines. Alisa Solomon writes that the boy actor's job was "to put notions in our heads, to persuade us, for a couple of hours anyway, that sight and shape be true" in relation to their portrayal of female characters, in essence, to create an illusion of the feminine (25). Through doing this, "the boy-actress's own gender ambiguity is projected onto the audience" in a way that calls into question the heteronormative sexual integrity of not only the actors but also of those watching their performance (25).

While the actors of Shakespeare's stage were scrutinized for this blurring of heteronormative boundaries and gender expectations, this same sexual objectification is carried over into the portrayal of Shakespeare's crossdressing heroines as objects of desire. Most notably, this is true of Viola's character in *Twelfth Night* and of Rosalind in *As You Like It.* In each of these character's plot lines, there are members of both sexes who end up falling in love with the heroine, both as a woman *and* as their respective male-disguised identities of Cesario and Ganymede. This confusion and ambiguity, not only of the heroines' identities, but also of their love interests' sexualities, raise questions of illicit homosexual desire in both plays. In the cases of both Viola and Olivia *and* Rosalind and Phoebe, the implications of their accidental lesbian attraction are used as a device for comedic relief. As Hedrick writes, this plot device created through Viola and Rosalind's crossdressing is an "implied, but obvious, joke which depicts the laughable light in which female-to-female sexuality was held" (123), and in turn, made light of the implied homosexual relationships with the heroine's respective love interests.

In *Twelfth Night,* Olivia falls in love with Cesario through a series of increasingly impassioned encounters while Orsino struggles with an inexplicable attraction to Cesario throughout the play. Viola as a character is, for the majority of the play, caught in a "gendered double bind: a woman's body (and soul) straightjacketed in the supposedly liberating clothing of a man" (Stone 27). She is unable to pursue her love of Orsino due to her disguise, and her disguise is the reason for her unintentional involvement with Olivia. The lesbian implications of Olivia's attraction to Viola as Cesario are in some ways overshadowed by Orsino's muted homosexual attraction to Cesario in that Viola, as a woman, is in love with Orsino in return. When Orsino learns of Viola's true identity at the close of the play, he still refers to her as Cesario in his last lines: "for so [s/he] shall be while [s/he] is a man," indicating that she is not yet a woman until she is "in other

habits… seen," removing her male disguise and making the visual and explicit transformation to "woman" (V.i.373-4). In order for Orsino, and society, to see Viola as a woman, they require ocular proof, or the visual representation, of her gender as this is the only surefire way to make sure that Viola is, in fact, a woman.

Catherine Thomas further explores this concept in her essay "Nunn's Sweet Transvestite: Desiring Viola in *Twelfth Night.*" Thomas's primary argument is that the narrative of *Twelfth Night* "playfully insists on the many possibilities for erotic desire, suggesting that while love does conquer all, desire can be found in many places" (307). Viola acts not only as the one being desired, but also as the active desirer within the narrative. Her primary function in the play is to serve as the genderfluid object of desire that ushers Olivia and Orsino to their "appropriate heterosexual ends" (308) at the close of the play. Playing upon the concept of constructed gender identity, Cesario/Viola is presented as neither fully woman nor fully man, complicating any hard and fast surface definition of their concrete gender identity or sexual orientation. Hedrick writes in her essay "'Male and Female He created them': Counterfeit Masculinity and Gender Presentation as Social Structure in Scotland and England" about the implications of gendered expression in regard to female crossdressing within the context of English Renaissance society. In her discussion of crossdressing in Shakespeare's comedic works, she writes that "male garb was often a device for achieving authority temporarily in order to prove oneself to a man, only to step down from that authority once feasible" (Hedrick 122-3). Viola is particularly comfortable in her disguise, choosing to continue presenting herself as a man so long as it continues to benefit her, but this transformation isn't a permanent one. Towards the end of the play, her desire for Orsino becomes a more powerful draw than the mobility and safety she originally gained through her disguise as Cesario. This pursuit of romantic and sexual desire ends up being the ultimate decision-maker driving the plot, bringing the action to its "appropriate" and collective end as Viola returns to her identity as Viola and all is revealed.

The same can be said of Rosalind and her disguise as Ganymede in *As You Like It*. Rosalind (in her male disguise) finds herself trapped as the object of desire of the shepherdess Phoebe and as Orlando's constructed object of desire when she takes on the role of 'Rosalind' during their roleplaying interaction in the woods. As discussed in her essay, "Fortune's Turn," Valerie Rohy makes the argument that there are "complex homosexual energies surrounding Ganymede, Phoebe, Orlando, and Rosalind" and that these energies are heavily tied to the irremovable concept of fate

in relationship to ultimate outcome of the play (55). While confusion and complications are introduced based upon the complexities of Rosalind's disguise (and the homosexual implications therein), the audience is comforted with the understanding that, by the end of the play, each party will end up with their intended respective heterosexual partners. Regardless of what happens in the chaotic interim of the comedy, the audience knows that, when all is said and done, the characters' fates will come to fruition through the "narrative insistence" of the fulfillment of love's immutable heteronormative nature (Rohy 55-60). The tense and sexually fraught role-playing interaction between Ganymede and Orlando is given more weight and validity than any of the awkward and comical pursuits between Ganymede and Phoebe for this reason. The audience *knows* that Rosalind and Orlando will end up together at the end of all things, so their anticipation of this "ideal" heterosexual relationship outweighs any thoughts or speculations of a potential homosexual relationship with Phoebe. Phoebe's pursuits are seen purely as comedy, nothing more than an absurd aside to complicate and exacerbate the comic chaos of the play. This action would have been made even more chaotic (and comical) for the audience based upon the culture of Shakespeare's early stage wherein both Phoebe and Rosalind/Ganymede would be portrayed by men. The class divide between someone as "low" as Phoebe (a simple goat herder) and Rosalind's true identity (the daughter of a duke) is so extremely wide that it only adds to the absurdity of Phoebe's affections towards her.

While crossdressing offers women a degree of movement among questions of gender and sexuality, Shakespeare's comedic heroines are also clearly granted some class mobility through their disguises. While most of this essay's discussion has been over instances of gendered crossdressing, dressing across classes was just as serious of an offense in English Renaissance culture. Transcending class boundaries as another form of crossdressing afforded Portia, Viola, and Rosalind greater autonomy and mobility within their respective situations, increasing their level of power over their own fate and the fates of those around them. It is worth noting that in each instance of female crossdressing in Shakespeare's works, the women are actually crossing down into lower class levels. In these instances, it is not the upward mobility of appearance that matters. Instead, the value of crossing class boundaries lies in the general freedom and obscurity that's afforded to members of the lower class in matters of physical indiscretion and visibility.

Portia's role in *The Merchant of Venice* is unique among these three heroines in that she spends a comparatively short period of time in male disguise. Rather than crossdressing for the

majority of the play to achieve greater mobility or safety for herself, Portia (and her servant, Nerissa) take on a male disguise for only one scene in order to participate in the male-exclusive sphere of law and justice in order to save her lover's friend, Antonio. Portia and Nerissa's act of cross-dressing would have been considered more socially acceptable in Shakespeare's contemporary culture than Rosalind's or Viola's efforts in that their crossdressing takes place for a very brief, finite period of time and is conducted to achieve a very specific purpose, most notably, to the benefit of a man. Portia is already in a place of privilege due to her social station as the Lady of Belmont, so she ultimately has more mobility and autonomy than many other women of her time period due to her social class. Even so, she is still restricted by her gender. Here, her need to save her beloved's friend permits her to assume male clothing, which therefore allows her "to assume male privilege and practice law" (Hedrick 124). Even as the Lady of Belmont, the arena of legal discourse would have been out of her sphere of influence due to her gender. While a lawyer would certainly be below her social station as part of the aristocracy, she is still able to gain and wield additional power through crossdressing as a man.

By taking on a male disguise, Portia and Nerissa elevate themselves to the same disguised social clout of the other men participating in the court, simply by portraying themselves as men. It's worth noting that even though both Portia and Nerissa are "transcend[ing] gender hierarchies during this period by appearing in the Venetian court as youths, they nonetheless retain their [respective] class positions: Portia plays the lawyer, and Nerissa his clerk" (Olson 71). This suggests that even though gender boundaries may become surmountable obstacles for women to overcome, issues of class were not so easily altered. Even in their joint instance of gendered crossdressing and their tight cross-class companionship, Nerissa, a servant, is nowhere near to equaling Portia in social class, and she never will be. They collectively gain gender-based social clout by entering the intellectual, male-dominated realm of law, but each woman is still restricted to her own respective class position of superior and inferior within the context of their situation.

Rosalind and Celia in *As You Like It* similarly downgrade their class standing through their plan of disguise, crossdressing into a lower social station than the one that they naturally belong to. Their reason for crossing down was a question of safety and improved mobility. By taking on the roles of shepherds, they remove some of the suspicion and attention that would have been otherwise attracted by two young, urbanite women wandering alone in the forest. Rosalind's male role as Ganymede offered a layer of protection through the gendered power associated with men,

but their joint crossdressing effort in lowering their social class to those of shepherds offered another level of protection by removing the heightened scrutiny of aristocratic classes. Through taking on the disguise of not only a man, but also of lower class citizens, the pair creates a safe pathway for which they can travel unescorted into the countryside. The plan that they devise together is ultimately one of improving their level of autonomy, as Celia states "Now we go in content, / To liberty, and not to banishment" (II.i.131-2), gaining a freedom and liberty from their disguises that they would not have had in their unaltered female identities.

It is through these heavily constructed and artificed expressions of identity that Viola, Rosalind, and Portia each call into question the societal norms of gender, class, and sexuality within their own stories in relationship to the constraints of female autonomy within the context of the English Renaissance. While their stories stand alone, their constructed expressions of gender through disguised instances of cross-dressing were further complicated by the physically staged representation of their identities by young, male actors on Shakespeare's early stage. Creating a sense of counterfeit femininity was essential to the performance of any female character on Shakespeare's early stage, but the ways in which the characters themselves are crafted and written create a double-mirror of counterfeit masculinity as well. All of these constructed representations of gender beg the question, what expressions of gender are *not* constructed? Is there an outward, physical representation of gender or class that is not performative in some manner?

Judith Butler's groundbreaking work *Gender Trouble* suggests that the entire social construct of gender is inherently performative. Her primary assertion is that, ultimately, gender is created and expressed through an individual's actions and behaviors, rather than any sort of intrinsic or innate traits belonging to the individual. Differentiating sex from gender, our concept of what constitutes femininity and masculinity revolves around a set of societally mandated behaviors, speech patterns, physical appearances, dress codes, and prohibitions that determine how we define woman and man. Butler argues that the concept of gender is *only* tied to the concept of sex in that patriarchal society uses the identification markers of sex to oppress individuals who belong to the "feminine" gender identity (Butler 32). The identities associated with each gender are tied to specific sets of expectations that we hold collectively as a society, and individuals who exist outside of this binary of male and female disrupt that societal contract of gender that we continue to perpetuate.

According to Butler, one cultural phenomenon that, at its core, exposes the performative nature of gender is the existence of a drag scene in modern society. Drag (and the theatre in general) raises some serious questions regarding gender expression and identity. Is a man appearing in women's clothes still fundamentally a man in behavior and identity, only with the exterior appearance of a woman? Or does the overt and dramatized femininity displayed by him prove that his identity is essentially a feminine one, in spite of his "male" body? The answers to those questions are unclear and vary from individual to individual. Drag ultimately exists as a way to resist and flip the power structures which regulate society and gender identity by purposefully and theatrically ridiculing the normative cultural concepts of femininity and masculinity. Drag performance aims at destabilizing the "truth" of sexual and gender identity by pointing to the fact that there is no obligating reason that there cannot be "dissonance" between "anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance" (175). In this way, drag exposes societal pressures and constructs at the base of gender performativity. At the core of the practice, drag queens reveal and highlight the instability of the relationship between sex and gender, and "in imitating gender," subsequently and "implicitly reveal the imitative structure of gender itself" (175).

These concepts of performativity bring us back to the question at the root of it all: who gets to decide what constitutes the feminine and the masculine? Culturally, the way that individuals express and internalize gender norms revolves around the ideas of performativity and social constructs. As long as gender roles and expectations have been used as an avenue to oppress and control women, women (and other nonbinary individuals) have been finding ways to navigate and undermine those expectations to garner greater autonomy and independence within those constructs. Be it through the liminal space of Shakespeare's Renaissance stage or the cultural shift of postmodern American society, as our society's understanding of gender and gender expression shifts and expands, I've come to ask myself more and more frequently if RuPaul hasn't had it right all along: "We're all born naked and the rest is drag."

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The Political, Historical, and Modern-Day Relevance of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "The Cry of the Children"

Alaina Phelps

Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote "The Cry of the Children" in 1843 in response to the horrible abuse of child labor in Britain at the time. During the Victorian era, major historical and political changes occurred, including industrialization, scientific discovery, and imperialism. These changes impacted conceptions of class and gender, and also had an impact on the literature being produced, particularly concerning whether or not literature should directly respond to these political concerns of the day. According to Katherine Montwieler, Henry James, a major American author regarded as a key transitional figure between literary realism and literary modernism, claimed that politics was simply an inappropriate subject for poetry (292). However, Browning's poem "The Cry of The Children" directly contradicts this view on politics and poetry through its call to action for political reform. E.B.B directly addresses her audience in hopes of drawing attention to the awful and cruel truth of child labor in Britain. Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem "The Cry of the Children" was a crucial text in pushing for political reform when it came to the harsh conditions of child labor during the nineteenth century. The poem is still relevant today due to its effective use of literature to influence legislation and politics; it is a work of literature that should be required reading for children in our public-school system. With its relevance to both British and American history, and current events such as sweat shop labor, this strong defense for the rights of children is an influential and foundational text for students to analyze.

Most modern Americans believe that one's childhood should consist of running outside, playing with friends, going to school, and making mud pies. But for the children in Britain in the nineteenth century, it consisted of working 52 hours a week in winter and 64 hours in the summer (Lewis 33). During this time, children were one of the most prevalent groups of mistreated and unprotected people in England. They were given responsibilities and jobs that just were too dangerous for them, but they were expected to perform and perform well. Children were depended upon to provide for their family, and they viewed their familial role as completely normal. Thousands of children between the ages of 7 and 14 worked daily in the Yorkshire worsted mills from 6:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M. with only one 30-minute break (33). Today, with the current laws regulating labor in the United States, adults are not even allowed to work such strenuous schedules.

It is easy to blame the parents of these working children in an effort to find a reason as to why these harsh conditions even existed, but parents often had little choice over such cruel treatment of their children. They were in desperate need of more income and found that their children could be used as another way to bring in more money for the family.

Most critics read Browning's attempt to approach politics through poetry as disastrous since what many classify as the finest poetry is, by its very nature, believed to be apolitical since some believe literature should express timeless themes rather than the passing political concerns of the day (Montwieler 292). In "The Sentimental Artistry of Barrett Browning's 'The Cry of the Children,'" Peaches Henry has much to say about the implications of Browning's poem. Henry discusses how critics have dismissed the poem as too religious, sentimental, or socially conscious to be considered aesthetically worthy. Many critics argue that because Browning is female and employs sentimental poetic devices, her argument is less valid. However, Katherine Montwieler contends that the poem is an effective political critique that holds valuable political implications. Along with Henry and Montwieler, Donald M. Lewis and Kevin D. Crow provide insight to the history of Great Britain and offer a more political view into the harsh conditions of child labor. Lewis and Crow examine the time of change, discussing and highlighting the reform in Great Britain. They present the problematic issues, including child labor, during nineteenth-century Britain and how religion, specifically Christianity influenced how these issues were discussed. Lewis and Crow specifically include the issues of class, education, civil rights, prison reform, and white slavery among children. Ultimately, these critics agree that the mid-nineteenth century, when Barret Browning was writing, was a time of reform and authors like Browning were concerned with focusing on and initiating change.

Many factors lead up to the dark time in which British society accepted child labor as the new "norm." Victorian Britain witnessed urban growth unprecedented in human history. Nowhere was this more evident and alarming than in London, where the population grew from about 850,000 in 1800 to just under 5 million by 1890 (Lewis). Unfortunately, growth like this has many implications for a country, especially the economy. The people most affected by this growth were women and children, and because of the growing population, it became increasingly difficult to get a job. Families were struggling, and many were desperate enough to send their children to work in mines and factories. Unfortunately, factory owners often took advantage of these children and families. By 1850 over half of London's children were in the workforce in order to keep their

families from starvation. Some children began to work as early as the age of 5 (Lewis). This was the sad reality of what families were forced to do in order to keep food on the table and a roof over their heads. Due to the nature of the child labor phenomenon in working class homes, many families saw sending their children to work in dangerous factories as acceptable and necessary.

Anywhere that there was work, children were employed, regardless of how harsh the conditions were for the job. Some jobs, like working in chimneys and coal mines, were specifically given to the children because they were the only ones small enough to fit into tiny spaces. As Donald Lewis and Kevin Crow discuss, children were not only put in England's "dark, satanic mills" to work (33). They were also used in coal, tin, and copper mines, crawling on all fours like animals, pulling heavy loads. Many returned from work with their arms and knees bloody, and deaths from suffocation in the chimney were not unheard of (Lewis). Not only were children being forced to work in dangerous environments, but little girls were being exploited to make ends meet for their families as well. Girls as young as 7 or 8 years old tramped the streets in hopes of moving on to a less reputable but more lucrative profession by their early teens. In 1857 *The Lancet* (Britain's leading medical journal), estimated that London had some 80,000 prostitutes, a huge portion of working-class females (Lewis 33).

Religion played a role in protesting but also enabling these conditions. Donald Lewis and Kevin Crow discuss how Evangelical reformers were particularly concerned about the immorality that such working conditions encouraged but did not seem to be concerned with the harsh reality that children's lives were being put at risk working in these conditions (33). The children who were put to work at such an early age were inhumanely stripped of their childhood. The reformers biggest concerns did not lie with the fact that children were working or with the harsh working conditions. Instead, they were primarily concerned with the fact that little boys and girls were tempted to sin within the conditions in which they worked. For instance, Lewis and Crow illustrate how the reformers disapproved of the lack of parental supervision and how children of both sexes often worked and slept in close proximity (33). Reformers also disapproved of girls and boys being lowered together into the mines, and the girls working naked alongside completely naked men (Lewis). Even though the reformers had ill reason to be upset about the conditions that the children worked in, their concerns still helped to promote change and gain advocates for the voiceless children in the workforce. Despite these issues, Evangelical reformers fought for reform and rights for the children. Even though their reasoning was flawed, they still helped the children. Many of

the reformers fought in hope of bringing justice to the child prostitution that occurred in the workplace on a casual and regular basis (Lewis 33). Employers would often not only put their girls to work, but they would also sell these girls for more profitable gain. For many young girls, prostitution became a full-time job because the material benefits were often better than anything they could possibly earn otherwise (Lewis 33).

After many years of child workers being mistreated, there were finally people who took notice of their plight and were looking to make a difference in the conditions of child workers. Middle and upper-class British citizens took charge in making a difference in the working-class homes and lifestyles. Often people from other socioeconomic classes had no idea what life was like for the working-class people, but they would try and speak on behalf of the working-class. This was problematic in the sense that citizens were trying to give a voice to the voiceless, but they had no idea what the voices wanted to say. Elizabeth Barrett Browning was one of these reformers who attempted to give a voice to the voiceless, taking charge in pushing for a change.

Browning's poem "The Cry of the Children" is a political statement that actively calls out to the citizens who are unable to see the harsh reality of the children's lives. She viewed herself as a poet-prophet speaking at the center of culture to an audience, mainly upper-class citizens, who were oblivious to the atrocities happening in the mines (Henry 536). Browning's "The Cry of the Children" is meant to reach and influence the upper-class citizens who were turning a blind eye to the reality of the slavery happening during the Victorian era. The way Browning calls to her audience and directly attempts to influence their views is what brings life to the poem. Henry labels "The Cry of the Children" a "beautifully crafted poem, composed of thirteen linked stanzas whose rich symbolism and graphic imagery exposes the degradation and dehumanization experienced by Great Britain's working children" (544). Browning shows women have a right, even a duty, to consider, to discuss, and to critique political matters (Montwieler 295-296).

The message, that something needs to be done about the child slavery, and audience, the upper-class citizens who are turning a blind eye, can be seen throughout the poem. Through Browning's rich literary techniques such as imagery, emotional appeal, and the way she indirectly challenges the views of the targeted audience, the poem is an effective political critique employing the sentimental tradition to influence contemporary politics. The very first line of the poem is written in Greek. This line is significant because it translates to "Alas, my children, why do you look at me?" which is taken from Euripides' tragedy *Medea* (Norton Anthology 1079). The reason

Browning chose to write this line in Greek is because she is trying to capture the attention of her audience, which in this case would be upper class, white, British men because they are the only ones who would have been able to read Greek at this time. This line is also significant to Browning's convincing message regarding the child laborers because not only is it pointing out the targeted audience, but it is directly appealing to that reader. This is an attempt at reaching the readers on a level that will draw their attention to the conditions to which they turn a blind eye. Henry states that Browning "believes that the ability of the poet to appeal to the emotions in a way that truly touched an audience to think or act differently is when the poet has been successful" (541). The epigraph written in Greek makes the reader ask the children why they are looking at them which is enough to grab any reader's attention. According to Browning, a poet who was unable to stand up for political reform, could not and did not deserve to influence the world (Henry 541).

After Browning grabs the attention of her audience, she keeps their attention and pulls them into the poem in several ways. In the first stanza, the reader is directly addressed by the speaker: "Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers" (1). This direct address is not only calling the reader's attention to the children who are being mistreated, but it is also interpellating the reader as a 'brother.' This type of direct address is used in an attempt to call on the reader as a family of humankind. The usage of this technique is why many critics question Browning's use of sentimentality, but it by no means weakens her call to action; if anything, this technique just strengthens the argument she is making. The poem's sentimental nature allows the reader to open his/her eyes to the fact that people, specifically children, are being treated inhumanely. As Henry points out, "[Browning's] deployment of sentimental strategies and devices often resulted in some of her most intellectually complex and aesthetically powerful poetry" (536). In short, even though Browning uses sentimentality with her audience, a genre often dismissed by male critics as too feminine, it is what makes her message so powerful.

Not only does Browning pull the reader in and connect them to the child laborers, but she also appeals to the reader's religion. Browning makes an attempt to connect to the reader as fellow Christians when she addresses them as "brothers." "Brothers" refers to Christians saying that they are all brothers and sisters in Christ. Browning continues to show the reader how he has turned his back on the children, and, by extension, God and Christian duty. At the end of the first stanza, the speaker says: "they are weeping in the playtime of the others, In the country of the free" (12).

When Browning addresses the audience as "others" she is excluding the children from the direct address of "brother." The first stanza immediately draws clear attention to the use of sentimentality that is prevalent throughout the poem. To critics of the sentimental tradition, this immediately sets Browning up for failure as an effective political poet. Yet, as Henry points out, Browning realized the difficulties associated with sentimentality for the female poet (538). That realization did not deter her because she needed her message to be heard and she knew sentimentality would best grab her audience's attention and encompass the reality of the issues of child slavery. Browning's relationship with feeling, the main currency of sentimental literature, was complicated both by her position as a woman in Victorian society and her sense of herself as a poet (538). She not only successfully wrote a politically driven poem, but she also defied all societal expectations and shocked the critics with her powerful appeals.

Throughout the middle of the poem Browning shares the dark and terrifying truths about the children's lives in the coal mines. This part of the poem may seem the most sentimental (featuring scenes of distress and tenderness, and the plot is arranged to advance both emotions and actions) because the descriptions of the conditions are so moving it is hard not feel a sense of pity for the deplorable conditions in which the children are forced to work. In the fourth stanza the speaker says: "'True,' say the children, 'it may happen / That we die before our time'" (36-37). Henry points out that the children's lives, devoid of sunshine, nature, pleasure, and rest, are indeed pathetic (547). As the reader becomes aware of the true nature of the children's working conditions, he begins to feel a sense of helplessness. Browning deliberately uses language in the poem that elicits this specific emotional response from the reader. However, Browning "rejects pity, exposes ignorance, and, rather than unbridled emotion, demands passionate indignation that such suffering is allowed to exist in Great Britain" (547). Browning acknowledges the emotions that will be felt by the reader, but she is so driven to advance her message about these harsh conditions that she passes off the emotions as not as important as the message she is trying to convey.

Browning takes her argument even further to ensure that the reader does not lose sight of the argument being presented. In the fourth stanza Browning describes a story about a girl named Alice, who died from working in the mines. This again is a very harsh story to be told and appeals to the emotions of the reader. This story is crucial for the argument Browning presents because it helps the reader connect to the children working in the mines. Telling the reader about the conditions in a general way will make them aware of the issues but connecting them to a single

person who has been affected by these harsh conditions will give them a sense of attachment. The children who are working in the mines respond to the death of Alice with: "'It is good when it happens,' say the children, / 'that we die before our time'" (51-52). In the following stanza Browning also makes another jab at the absurdity of children thinking of death as a "good" by writing "Alas, alas, the children! they are seeking / Death in life, as best to have" (53-54). Thus, Browning brings attention to this sad reality in order to evoke emotional power and outrage in the reader in hopes of sparking political reforms. Browning consistently attempts to appeal to the emotions of the reader and uses gruesome stories as well as facts about the harsh reality of the mines in order to get her audience on board with fixing the child labor problems in Britain.

Browning appeals to the reader's emotions through the harsh conditions in the mines, while she also addresses religion throughout the poem. As Henry argues, "Not only did [Browning] think that poetry could be ethical, she also thought that it could and should be religious and did not hesitate to incorporate religiosity into her poetry" (536). The children are clearly living in a form of hell. The mines are dirty, hot, dangerous, and not a place someone would want their "brother" in Christ to be. The speaker of the poem says, "Now tell the poor young children; O my brothers, / To look up to Him and pray" (101-2). Through the use of emotional appeal and the attack on the reader's religious views she is able to make her point about the political reform that is the drive for the entire poem. When Browning depicts the children saying, "We know no other words except 'Our Father'" (117), it is as if she is saying that this "Father" is doing nothing for the crying children. Browning's use of "passionate feeling, religion, and other aspects of sentimentality seems entirely appropriate and is used to her advantage to get her point across" (Henry 536). In no way does this approach make her argument any less valid.

One thing Browning makes sure to do in "The Cry of the Children" is to never lose sight of her targeted audience and message. In the last stanza, Browning refers back to the epigraph from Medea with which she opens the poem. She writes, "They look up with their pale and sunken faces, / and their look is dread to see" (149-150). This connects the reader back to understand who Browning is targeting throughout the poem. This is important because not only is Browning appealing to the reader's emotions by using this imagery again, but she is also answering the question she opened with, but now directly in English instead of Greek. When she first asked the question that alludes to *Medea,* Browning addresses her upper-class male audience directly because they are the only ones who can read Greek. By answering the question at the end of the

poem in English she is bringing everyone (the British citizens) to the same level. Everyone is capable of reading this and witnessing the crime that is child labor. According to Horne "the physical and mental effects of work on children were profoundly detrimental. He reported in relentless detail the onerous, dangerous, monotonous jobs performed by children who labored under unimaginable conditions" (qtd in Henry 542). Not only has Browning effectively gotten her point across about the harsh conditions within the mines, but she has also made her point to call out the reader for their actions, or rather lack of action, against these atrocities.

After the poem was published, reform began to take place, not only in terms of child labor laws but also in terms of compulsory education for children throughout Britain. Sascha Auerbach in her article, "Some Punishment Should Be Devised" focuses on reforms to improve education in London, England between 1870 and 1904. She discusses the creation of school boards in response to the Education Act of 1870. She draws much attention to the educational philosophies of the nineteenth century, which argue that "state-sponsored education is preferable compared to the evils of child labor and had the added benefit that children become better citizens" (Auerbach 758).

The Education Act of 1870 was the first push against the intense child labor laws. The Education Act of 1870 (also known as "The Forster Act"), established the foundations of England's first public elementary education system (Auerbach 758). The London School Board (LSB) stated that one of their most difficult obstacles would be "ignorant and unscrupulous parents" (Auerbach 758). Even though many parents knew they were putting their children at risk by sending them to the mines, they did it to help their family survive. Educational reformers and many members of the LSB believed that they, all the people not in the working class, were knowledgeable and capable of making decisions pertaining to the working-class. One of the central justifications for state intervention, which appeared again and again in the arguments for compulsory education, was that working-class parents had little emotional attachment to their children and were indifferent to their health and well-being (762-763). The government had only one solution to help the children who were put in these horrible working conditions. The Education Act of 1870 was a watershed in the history of English social reform, but the decision by the LSB to adopt *compulsory* education in 1871 also represented a milestone in the evolution of the British interventionist state (Auerbach 761). Changing to compulsory education meant that education was required by law for children. This did not put a stop to the harsh conditions of child labor, but it did help to limit it and also gave the children a way out of the factories and mines. This act required

companies to give the children a few hours, depending on age, of education throughout the week. Federick Timbrell, a nineteenth-century education reformer, illustrated how compulsory education created a "reconstitution of the role of working-class children more in line with contemporary middle-class ideals of childhood and with a view toward their potential contributions to the nation" (763). In short, these educational reforms took the lives that the children were so accustomed to and showed them that there is another way to enjoy their childhood. Furthermore, they showed that working was not the way to create promising citizens for future generations to come. "The goal," argued Timbrell, "was to use compulsory schooling as a means to rescue children from the workplace and from the parental avarice that kept them there" (763). Timbrell portrays working-class parents as being concerned only with children's economic contributions and as being entirely indifferent to their own parental obligations (763). In addition to such educational reforms, in 1833, there was an act set in motion that set a minimum age for employment and maximum daily hours for the employment of children up to age 13 (Auerbach 766). The act of 1833 not only set rules and guidelines companies had to follow for employment, but it also set minimum periods of daily education for child laborers (Auerbach 766). The law stated that "if a child was employed daily, then the child should receive three hours of schooling a day; if he was employed on alternate days, five hours of schooling a day was required on the days in between" (Auerbach 766). So not only did the government step in to ensure that there would be education given to all children, but they also set limits and rules to the children working.

Literature like Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "The Cry of the Children" is important for students to read when studying history but also the relationship between literature and politics. It is a part of the Kentucky common core standards that students read and analyze literature that is relevant in United States history as well as history around the world. A poem like Browning's "The Cry of the Children" can be used to teach students about the harsh conditions of child labor in Britain, but it would also be productive in opening the door for children to see the same issues within their own country's history. This also allows students to see the importance of literature and how it can be used to influence change just how "The Cry of the Children" was used in Parliament to give voice to the children who had none.

Ultimately, Browning makes politics explicit in her poetry through the use of pathos and rich imagery to directly implicate her audience in the harsh reality of the children being forced to work in the mines and factories of industrial England. As Henry states, "[Browning's] relationship

with feeling, the main currency of sentimental literature, was complicated both by her position as a woman in Victorian society and her sense of herself as a poet" (538). She exposes the specific ways her audience turns a blind eye towards the issue of child labor as well as attacks and addresses what is actually going on within the mines and factories through the strong use of political and emotional strategies. In regard to the sentimental tradition and women writers, "[Browning] wrote during a time when both women's lives and art were limited by social conventions which marked them as emotional rather than reasoning" (Henry 538). This also made way for people to believe that women lacked the capability to understand broad societal problems. Clearly, Browning defied all of these societal assumptions and that is why she was criticized so harshly by her contemporaries. Henry states that Browning "knew that poetry deemed emotional ran the risk of being associated with the feminine and thus losing its ability to influence Victorian audiences, a peril she resisted" (538). Browning's poem "The Cry of the Children" is a political reform to actively call out to the citizens who don't see the harsh reality of the children's lives. Browning does this effectively through the medium of sentimental literature, and thus illustrates the power of both the genre and also women writers to create political change.

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The Power of an Empty Tower: A Look at the Panopticon Within *1984*

Trevor Stonecypher

The Panopticon, developed by Jeremy Bentham in the late 18th century, is a structure that was originally intended to serve as the perfect prison that trains each inmate, the resident of the cell, to always be on their best behavior. They possess no privacy within their cells and are under constant surveillance. In the 20th and 21st century, the right to privacy is thought of as one of the most basic human rights, alongside the right of one to express themselves and their opinions in a peaceable way and to pursue a lifestyle most suited to helping that individual survive. Recently, particularly due to digital data breaches and security, privacy has become embroiled within a larger debate that is centered around how much privacy an individual should possess, and how much authority a governing body, such as the National Security Agency (NSA), should have to invade that privacy. In George Orwell's 1949 dystopian novel *1984*, similar concerns are raised in the extreme case of surveillance within the fictional land of Oceania. The similarities between Orwell's text and the Panopticon are striking, and a pattern emerges when placed side by side. The Panopticon, once thought of only in terms of a physical structure, has become synonymous with the ever-encroaching surveillance of the authority in any state and can be seen throughout *1984*, as well as the contemporary world.

Jeremy Bentham was an 18th century philosopher and social reformer and the designer of the Panopticon. The idea of the Panopticon was first promulgated in a series of letters Bentham wrote from Russia to a "friend in England" (Bentham 1). The letters written by Bentham describe, in detail, his ingenious idea for the creation of a building designed for "obtaining power of mind over mind, in a quantity hitherto without example" (1). This structure's main purpose was to serve as the perfect prison, meant to create an efficient means of staffing whilst also allowing for the complete control of the inmate population. The Panopticon was designed to concentrate power within a single tower. No longer would jails need guards constantly patrolling as individual manifestations of power; instead the entirety of the governing body's power would be placed within a tower at the center of the jail. Radiating out from this tower like spokes on a wheel would be cells, with a window facing the tower and a window on the outer wall for letting in light. The cell would possess no structures that the inmate might use to hide behind, thus affording a perfect view for whoever looks out at the cell from the tower. At the same time, the medium through

which the tower views the inmate wouldn't allow light to pass through it, so the inmate would never actually be able to see inside the tower (Bentham 35). This lack of reciprocal vision is what makes the tower so powerful. The inmate never knows when they are being watched, and thus becomes conditioned to act on their best behavior constantly. The 20th century philosopher and cultural critic Michel Foucault is credited with developing the theory of panopticism, in which the structure of the Panopticon is applied as a concept to society at large. In his work, *Discipline and Punish* (1975), he devotes an entire chapter to explaining how modern society is organized in a similar manner to Bentham's Panopticon. He speaks of the genius of the Panopticon's one way medium when he writes, "this invisibility is a guarantee of order. If the inmates are convicts, there is no danger of a plot…if they are patients, there is no danger of contagion; if they are madmen there is no risk of their committing violence upon one another; if they are schoolchildren, there is no copying… if they are workers, there are no disorders" (Foucault 200-1).

1984 is a work of dystopian fiction by George Orwell. Written in 1948, it is a predictive novel and offers Orwell's thoughts on what the future might hold. Themes of surveillance and privacy are constantly brought into play throughout the text as the protagonist, Winston Smith, tries to act outside of the established system that The Party has put in place. The Party, or Ingsoc, is a group within the text that is devoted to maintaining complete control over its country. It employs various means to ensure that no civilian has any recourse except to align themselves with the its current set of ideas. It is expansive and constantly encroaches upon the lives of its citizens through its many forms of surveillance. Oceania, the name of the fictional continent, is in a continual state of "war" that is perpetuated solely for the purpose of keeping the citizenry in line. Billboards and posters with phrases such as "Big Brother is Watching You" are placed all over Winston's city to remind the inhabitants that they are under surveillance. The power of the Party rests in its absolute control over the surrounding cityscape. History is constantly rewritten to align with the Party's current agenda. The various ministries of Love, Peace, Plenty, and Truth perform the exact opposite of their names, spreading hate, war, scarcity, and lies to keep the population in check. The middle class, to which Winston belongs, is under constant scrutiny by "telescreens" and other types of surveillance technology. The entirety of the society is based upon the control of the lower and middle classes through the constant watch of the upper class.

When compared, the Panopticon and Oceania are strikingly similar in a variety of ways. The Party is equivalent to the guards within the tower, and the various apparatuses the Party uses

for its surveillance correspond to the tower itself and its inherent power dynamic. Furthermore, the population under scrutiny resembles the inmate/worker/patient of the Panopticon. Indeed, the very structure of Oceanic society mirrors the panoptic design. Society extends outward from the Party's symbols of power (the ministries of Love, Peace, Plenty, and Truth) and is constantly reminded of their absolute power through the imposing presence of these buildings.

Visibility is key to the discussion of surveillance in *1984* and is imperative for the proper functioning of the Panopticon as well. Within the tower stands any number of authoritative figures who can look out at any time and observe any of the cells surrounding them. The medium through which the authority observes the residents of the cells is significant because it must be one-sided. The authoritative figure must be able to look at any time and see the resident, but the resident must never know when and if he/she is being watched. With this setup, a power binary develops in which power is not held by the authority behind the one-way medium, but by the tower itself. Thus, even a tower completely devoid of authoritative figures will still maintain a constant pressure upon the residents of each cell as though they are being watched. This was the original purpose and genius of Jeremy Bentham's design; the conditioning of the inmate/worker/student to always operate as though they were under watch, even if they are not. Bentham reiterates this point in his fifth and sixth letters, when he states:

> You will please observe, that though perhaps it is the most important point, that the persons to be expected should always feel themselves as if under inspection, at least as stand a great chance of being so. […] The essence of it consists, then, in the centrality of the inspector's situation, combined with the well-known and most effective contrivances for seeing without being seen. (43-45)

It is imperative, according to Bentham, that the resident of the cell constantly feel as though they are being watched, and that the watchman in the tower always operate on an unseen basis. Only when both of these criteria are met can the conditioning work of the Panopticon take full effect.

Orwell introduces his readers to the panoptic structure within the first chapter of *1984*. Winston Smith lives under the perpetual gaze of the "telescreen" that is set up in his room. The text gives a very detailed description of the telescreen when it says: "Any sound Winston made, above the level of a very low whisper, would be picked up by it; moreover, so long as he remained within the field of vision which the metal plaque commanded, he could be seen as well as heard" (Orwell 3). Whereas the panoptic design calls for a window or other such device for obscuring the

inmates' vision inside the tower, Orwell goes a step further by completely eliminating the immediate presence of the authority. Where once the authority would occupy the tower and look out directly at the inmate, in *1984* the panoptic design takes the form of indirect supervision. All the same, the immediacy of punishment is still a constant threat for the residents under scrutiny, for at any time their supervisors might speak through the Telescreen and reprimand them or call for the resident's arrest should they deem it necessary. The panoptic design can further be seen as the description of the telescreens continues, "There was no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment … you had to live—did live, from habit that became instinct—in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinized" (3). This description aligns perfectly with the same level of scrutiny that a prisoner within the Panopticon was meant to undergo.

The Panopticon's power is derived from the tower's constant view of the inmates, allowing for a consistent watch upon them without them knowing. They are conditioned to always act as though they are being watched and thus are always on their best behavior as a result. In *1984*, this same conditioning can be seen when Winston Smith enters his room: "He had set his features into the expression of quiet optimism which it was advisable to wear when facing the telescreen" (Orwell 5). Though Winston acknowledges that he puts on the face only as a show for the telescreen, it is strikingly similar to the conditioning of the prisoner, worker, or student held within a panoptic establishment. Winston does not want to let the Party see the dissatisfied look upon his face in the preceding passage, just as the prisoner does not want to get caught committing an illegal act, or the worker does not want to get caught slacking at his job. The tower contains the ability to constantly encourage the most desirable behavior for whoever is within its gaze. At any time, the warden running the tower could be replaced with the foreman for a specific job, and within hours he could have the entire population of the Panopticon conditioned to perform a completely different set of tasks than the previous administration. Who dwells within the tower does not matter, the constant pressure that the tower exerts is enough to encourage each occupant of the cell to perform at the level that is expected of him/her.

The entirety of the Panopticon's power is derived from visibility. Should there be a lapse in visibility, for whatever reason, the tower loses its power. While inmates might still be heard, it is sight that affords the greatest concentration for power, and lack of sight produces the greatest

risk of rebellion. Such is the case with Winston Smith, whose unique flat in Victory Mansions has a small alcove that was out of the telescreen's visual range. Orwell writes:

> Instead of being placed, as was normal, in the end wall, where it could command the whole room, it was in the longer wall, opposite the window. To one side of it there was a shallow alcove in which Winston was now sitting…by sitting in the alcove, and keeping well back, Winston was able to remain outside the range of the telescreen, so far as sight went. (Orwell 6)

It is this alcove that breaks the power of the ever-watching Telescreen. No matter who is behind the screen, they cannot look upon the occupant of the room. Lacking sight, both the telescreen and the tower lose all of their surveilling power. Winston could commit "thought crimes" without punishment, and the occupants of the actual Panopticon could commit any number of actions that might threaten the order of the closed system. When the assurance of punishment can no longer be enforced, the Panopticon fails to accomplish its original goal of instilling an omnipresence among its occupants.

The idea of a surveillance driven society is not something that Orwell created from thin air, but rather something that has real-life historical precedents and contemporary applications. Many historical examples exist of cases wherein a nation enacted laws or engaged in mass surveillance for "the greater good." D.O.R.A. (Defense of the Realm Act) is one such example of this government encroachment, in the case of Great Britain during World War I. Passed by the House of Commons in 1914, the Defense of the Realm Act expanded the powers of the British government to a capacity equal to "The Party." With the powers given by the act, the government of the time could suppress publishers who criticized the war effort, effectively destroying the idea of free speech that had long been thought of as a basic human right. Other powers were also given to the state under the guise of a wartime government, such as the ability to imprison without trial, thus only further expanding the panoptic powers of the British government of the time. Suppression of published works, alongside the wanton imprisonment of any person whom the government deems necessary, almost directly mirror the powers of the Party in *1984*. There have been many such examples of a government's encroachment upon the individual, and of those Orwell would have been privy to many. Orwell's *1984* personifies the overreach of various governments throughout history and makes predictions about the governments of the future. As

both a structure and an idea, the Panopticon can be seen in acts like D.O.R.A and other historical cases of government interference, as well as in more modern cases of surveillance.

The most prevalent contemporary example of mass surveillance is the NSA crisis involving Edward Snowden and the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). A whistleblower, Edward Snowden called America's attention to the gross misuse of power by the NSA through their use of digital technology to effectively spy on both America and its allied powers. Although ostensibly in response to the amorphous "war on terror," this differs greatly from D.O.R.A.'s justification in the context of World War I because the same necessity of wartime security measures could not be applied when it was revealed that the NSA was watching and listening to almost all American citizens through televisions and cellular devices. They received this power from the provisions held with the Patriot Act, which passed in the wake of the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11th, 2001. This act gave the NSA increased power to surveil American society, breaking the right to privacy that so many held dear. Orwell predicted such encroachments would occur, and his telescreens were the symbolic equivalent of the modern-day television and cell phone, each of which act as a "one-way medium" whereby the populace might be surveilled, whilst never being able to know for certain when they are being watched. Once again, this hearkens back to the panoptic design that is inherent throughout *1984*. Bentham's design permeates 20th century culture, where the citizenry must weigh the benefits of owning a modern communication device with the risk of their privacy being invaded at any time, unchecked.

Lawrence Lessig speaks of Orwell in relation to technology in his text "On the Internet and the Benign Invasions of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*." Lessig states, "Orwell hated technology. More particularly, he hated the then-emerging technologies of media—films, radios, and especially the gramophone" (213). He then goes on to directly quote Orwell, specifically in his essay "Poetry and the Microphone," in which Orwell expresses his distaste with technology not because technology is inherently evil, but because "all the broadcasting that now happens all over the world is under the control of governments or great monopoly companies" (qtd. in Lessig 213). This hatred Orwell held for technology and government control can be seen throughout his works, specifically in *1984*. Once again, the application of the Panopticon to such a statement by Orwell is fitting, for therein lies the basic principle for any panoptic design. The government inundates the lives of the people so that no matter where they look, they see the image of that faceless entity ("The Party") until it becomes second nature to align themselves with the expectations the

government puts forth. The telescreens and propaganda use in *1984* are direct byproducts of Orwell's hatred of the Panopticon with which the government has imprisoned its citizenry.

The use of symbols within *1984* mirror many modern structures seen throughout the world. Symbols are used as shorthand reminders that are recognized by a wide margin of the populace. One such example of this is the pyramid and eye on the back of the American dollar bill and found amongst various other types of currency. The eye, known as the "Eye of Providence," is widely accepted as the eye of God as He looks down upon the world below. The pyramid that the eye sits upon holds a great significance as well. Albert Potts speaks of the triangle as an extremely important symbol dating back to the middle ages in his text *The World's Eye.* Much of the value of symbolism in the triangle comes from its mathematical properties, and it has often been associated with power. With the Eye of Providence sitting at the top of the pyramid, the symbol is meant to emphasize God's control over all of His creation (78). In *1984*, Orwell takes the common theme of a triangle or pyramid being equated with power and uses it to represent "The Party." As the base of their operations, the imposing pyramids of the various Ministries are ever visible in Oceanic society, much like the tower of the Panopticon: "So completely did they dwarf the surrounding architecture that from the roof of Victory Mansions you could see all four of them simultaneously" (Orwell 4). Furthermore, the pyramids of Orwell's novel function as the centers of surveillance for the Party, effectively equating them to the eye at the top of the pyramids on the currency of various countries. This is intentional. The Party has equated themselves with God in that they are "always watching," hearkening back once more to those who dwell within the tower of the Panopticon. Their power is evident as Winston describes standing before them: "His heart quailed before the enormous pyramidal shape. It was too strong, it could not be stormed" (Orwell 27). These ever-present monstrosities accomplish the same mission that the tower achieves, to instill fear and an ever-present sense of watchfulness upon the population.

Just as the visibility of the occupant of a cell is important for the tower to function, so too is it important that the occupant of the cell constantly be able to see the tower, and yet never know when they are being watched. The currency of Oceania serves as the Party pushing the image of the "tower" directly onto the people. This image is not just on the currency, though. Street corners possess posters of Ingsoc slogans, and billboards profess "Big Brother is watching you" with a picture of the face of the Party upon it to further drive home the point. This is exemplified early

on in the novel, when Winston is pondering the vast presence of the Party throughout Oceanic society:

> He took a twenty-five-cent piece out of his pocket. There, too, in tiny clear lettering, the same slogans were inscribed, and on the other face of the coin the head of big brother. Even from the coin the eyes pursued you. On coins, on stamps, on the covers of books, on banners, on posters, and on the wrapping of a cigarette packet—everywhere. Always the eyes watching you and the voice enveloping you. Asleep or awake, working or eating, indoors or out of doors, in the bath or in bed—no escape. Nothing was your own except the few cubic centimeters inside your skull. (Orwell 27)

Visibility is imperative for the proper functioning of the Panopticon, both for the tower and the occupant of the cell. Visibility is also important for Oceanic society, where a lapse in sight by the Party could result in a revolution.

Visibility is not the only requirement for the Panopticon to work effectively. Isolation is extremely important within the actual structure of the Panopticon and is used to ensure that no insurrection, strike, or cheating occurs within its walls. Humanity has proven to be resourceful in the area of imprisonment, developing simple ways to communicate ideas without speech. For example, prisoners of war could tap upon a surface and use Morse code to rally allies to escape or start a riot. Any expression of ideas between two prisoners detracts from the power of those who run the prison. To maintain its power, the Panopticon must also ensure that the inmates remain isolated from one another. Thus, silence and invisibility are enforced norms upon the population residing within the Panopticon. In much the same way, Orwell includes several instances within *1984* of enforced silence and invisibility.

To apply the Panopticon to a country, one must realize that not every concept will be a one-to-one ratio. In the Panopticon, the warden can effectively enforce silence and isolation through warnings and force, as the situation allows. In a country such as Oceania, on the other hand, total silence cannot be feasibly enforced upon the entirety of its population. Indeed, it would not be feasible even to enforce total silence upon a specific class of people, like the middle class to which Winston belongs. Thus, one must look at the reason why the Panopticon would need to enforce silence. In the case of prisoners, silence is the only way to be completely assured that the prisoners are not conspiring with one another. By enforcing silence, the inmate loses their ability to plant ideas of rebellion in the minds of others. In the case of students within the Panopticon, it

is the greatest concern of the teacher that each student learns and does their own work. If a teacher allowed students to speak freely at any time, rampant cheating would likely occur as students would allow others to do their work for them. In the case of workers, there is no greater threat to efficiency in the workplace than a worker who spends more time talking than they do working. They are a constant distraction to other employees and if left unchecked can lead others to form a coalition against the foreman, in order to force him into action or be threatened by a strike. Only by enforcing silence can the foreman ensure that the greatest efficiency in work is achieved.

In Oceania, enforced silence is not mandatory, but highly encouraged. The most prevalent and subversive means of silencing the populace comes in the form of "Newspeak," a simplification of language that is a language all its own within *1984*. Included within *1984* is an appendix that is referenced in the actual text, and it explains the origins and purpose of Newspeak: "The Purpose of Newspeak was not only to provide a medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc (The Party), but to make all other modes of thought impossible." (Orwell 299-300) With this in mind, the parallels between the Panopticon and Oceanic society once again can be seen. The Party does not enforce silence, but instead "encourages" a type of silence wherein no seditious thoughts can exist. Words such as "rebellion" simply do not exist in Newspeak, and the idea behind this is that if there is no word for such a concept, the concept itself cannot take its place within the resident's mind. Just as the warden enforces silence in the Panopticon to ensure its proper functioning, so too does the Party limit the way in which the citizens of Oceania can think, and thus ensure the proper functioning of their society as well.

Silence can also be enforced through censorship. Similar to the goals of Newspeak, the censoring of any document that does not align with the Party's official direction at the time prevents the populace from ever being able to disagree with the Party. Winston Smith's job in Oceania is to "rectify" documents that do not align with the Party's ideals, involving such tasks as correcting statements made by party members earlier that turned out to be incorrect, to changing the entire structure of a recent news headline to better reflect the "omniscience" of the Party. This equates to a form of silence not dissimilar to that held within the Panopticon. Occupants of the cells must adhere to the will of whoever operates the tower and questioning such a will in any way is to be met with immediate punishment. The occupants of the cell, and the citizenry of Oceania, are conditioned to accept what is placed before them without hesitation.

Jean-Jacques Courtine, in his essay "A Brave New Language: Orwell's Invention of *Newspeak* in *1984*," speaks considerably of language, and Newspeak in particular. He states:

> Power must thus become master of language since language is the living memory of man and offers him a space for inner resistance. Language constitutes a screen between the totalitarian gaze and the human body, it offers the shelter of its shadow, it veils the harsh light needed to read bodies. Language threatens the totalitarian enterprise. It is in fact the zone of obscurity where the gaze is lost. (Courtine 70)

The power he references to is not just the Party but any power that has sought to subdue a population. To extend this further, it also includes the one who dwells within the tower. Mastery over a language, as asserted by Courtine, is important in the struggle between the tower and the cell occupant. Without complete control of the cell's occupant, including speech, the tower loses its power over the individual.

Isolation must be enforced within the Panopticon. Just as language can precipitate the fall of the tower, so too can the sight of another inmate inspire one to act against the will of the warden. Even primitive sign language can convey basic ideas, and any ideas conveyed between occupants of the cells are dangerous to the Panoptic design no matter how innocent they might be. By enforcing strict isolation, the Warden succeeds in maintaining power by hampering the occupants of the cell's desires to form together against the tower. The Party, once again, operates under similar terms. However, it wouldn't be possible for those who dwell behind the telescreens to constantly enforce the strict isolation of every citizen within Oceania. Instead, they perpetuate ideological divisions within the population that constantly encourage separation. This occurs in two distinct ways, both of which serve as equally effective forms of isolation.

The first way in which the Party encourages isolation in the population is through the class system they perpetuate. Winston, along with most other members of the middle class, holds a certain revulsion for the "proles," or lower class. The first time that Winston writes in the small alcove near his room, he chooses to write about the movies he went to see the night before. In particular, he chooses to focus on a specific incident involving a prole woman. "…but a woman down in the prole part of the house suddenly started kicking up a fuss and shouting…until the police turned her turned her out i dont suppose anything happened to her nobody cares what the proles say typical prole reaction" (Orwell 9). The "typical prole reaction" that Winston speaks of indicates that many people share his view of the proles. The culture Winston has lived in for so

long has conditioned him to consider the prole's reaction a common one, and one that elicits aggravation and disgust. Thus, he voluntarily creates distance between himself and those of the lower classes. Further separation can be seen in the fact that there is a "prole part of the house" in which they are sectioned off. This is accepted as normal and given no weighty significance in his diary entry, thus indicating how deeply ingrained the class system is within each member of Oceanic society.

The second form of isolation is much subtler and involves instilling fear in the populace at large. The use of spies and informants in Oceanic society is commonplace and mirrors closely the real paranoia that occurred during the age of the Hitler Youth during World War II. Children were indoctrinated to tell upon their parents to the Nazi authorities, who would then seize them for "questioning." This same idea is carried over to Oceania's society, where any citizen could be a member of the Thought Police, ready and waiting to reprimand the unwary citizen who might be careless enough to act contrary to the ideals of the Party. Winston describes the use of spies by the Party when he states: "It was almost normal for people over thirty to be frightened of their own children. And with good reason, for hardly a week passed in which the *Times* did not carry a paragraph describing how some eavesdropping little sneak— 'Child hero' was the phrase generally used—had overheard some compromising remark and denounced his parents to the Thought Police" (Orwell 24-25). With this constant fear of being informed against, the society of Oceania exists in a constant state of unease, where each person feels isolated from anyone around them due to their fear of being caught by the Thought Police.

The Panopticon was not made to focus upon individual power. If the warden were to stand within the tower one minute and leave the next to be replaced by a guard or even a child, the tower itself would not lose any power. It would still maintain a constant pressure upon the occupants of each cell. This constant pressure does not rely on the individual, just as Oceanic society does not rely upon a single Party member to maintain its watchful eye. Winston states that the telescreens could be watched at any time or perhaps all the time. By whom, he does not know, and yet he still operates as if under constant supervision (Orwell 3). The conditioning force that guides him to act is not the thought of his being watched by a certain individual, but the assurance of punishment at the hands of whatever individual is behind the screen. Thus, if no one was behind the screen, Winston would still be acting in accordance with the dictates he had been taught, solely because of the conditioning that he had been put through. Winston's behavior in front of the telescreen

illustrates the express purpose of the Panopticon; to condition the occupants of the cell to act, at all times, as though they are being watched.

The facelessness of the tower is further perpetuated by the various forms of propaganda that litter Oceanic society. The face of Big Brother is one of the more common sights in Oceanic society, and he serves not as a remembrance of any actual person, but as a figurehead for the Party in general. One specific poster Winston sees "depicted simply an enormous face, more than a meter wide: the face of a man of about forty-five, with a heavy black mustache and ruggedly handsome features" (Orwell 1). Later, Winston describes the poster itself as being "so contrived that the eyes follow you about when you move" (2). Each description that is given of Big Brother is non-specific, with the intention being that anybody could be Big Brother. He is a face that is not meant to stand for a specific man, but for the Party (or tower) itself. His eyes are the windows of the tower, and the phrase "Big Brother is watching you" is the literal adaptation of the panoptic idea to Oceanic society. He applies pressure to all who fall under his gaze, just as the tower applies pressure to all the occupants of the cells that surround it. Just as the warden within the tower is not the source of the pressure, so too are the members of the Party not the source of the pressure for those in Oceanic society. The machinations of the Party itself, built upon the reminders of their power placed strategically throughout the city, are the most effective means of enforcement they possess besides the Thought Police.

The Ministry of Love, or "Miniluv" in Newspeak, represents the other integral part of Oceania, and the Panopticon's, function. The tower cannot impose its pressure without first conditioning the population of the Panopticon. Thus, any behavior the current warden of the tower sees that they disapprove of is to be met immediately with corrective force. Once the guarantee of force is established among the population of the Panopticon, the tower itself can begin to apply its pressure on them. Only through the guarantee of swift and substantial force can the conditioning effect of the tower truly be felt by the occupants of the cells. In much the same way, simply claiming that "Big Brother is watching you" cannot hope to enforce the Party's ideals. It is only through the assurance of punishment, or "vaporization" in Orwellian terms, that the Big Brother posters can have their intended effect. Winston speaks of this assurance that accompanies any "thoughtcrime" the citizens of Oceania might commit when he says "It was always at night—the arrests invariably happened at night….in the vast majority of cases there was no trial, no report of arrest. People simply disappeared, always during the night…you were abolished, annihilated:

vaporized was the usual word" (Orwell 19). The fact that Winston expresses an understanding of this means that others of his same social class would understand it as well. This is the assurance of punishment that encourages them to act in the way that the Party, or "warden," wants them to.

The indoctrination of the public is a constant focus in Oceania. By creating complacency amongst the population, the Party guarantees that not only the generation being indoctrinated but also the generations that follow will not offer any resistance to their established order. This mirrors the use of walls within the Panopticon. If two prisoners are able to see one another and speak of their situation, the warden runs the risk of the entire Panopticon falling apart. If the prisoners all rally and overwhelm the established order, then the entire purpose of the Panopticon fails. Thus, the use of isolation and the limiting of the exchange of knowledge is imperative for its proper order and function. Winston works for "Minitru," or the Ministry of Truth and knows the inner workings of the censorship that takes place within its pyramid structure. In particular, he speaks of the media that is fed to the lower classes, stating:

> There was a whole chain of separate departments dealing with proletarian literature, music, drama, and entertainment generally. Here were produced rubbishy newspapers, containing almost nothing except sport, crime, and astrology, sensational five-cent novelettes, films oozing with sex, and sentimental songs…there was even a whole sub-section—Pornosec, it was called in Newspeak—engaged in producing the lowest kind of pornography… (Orwell 43)

By producing such useless forms of entertainment, the Party succeeds in preventing the proletariat from exchanging information that might be to the Party's detriment. Thus, even the media and entertainment of Oceania mirrors the walls and isolation of the Panopticon.

Bentham's panoptic ideas and structure can be readily seen throughout *1984*. The structure of Oceanic society revolves around the surveillance of the individual, who can be equated to the prisoner held within the Panopticon's many cells. The Party and Big Brother mirror the warden that dwells within the tower, imposing their will upon the individuals in the cells, equitable to Oceanic society at large. The tower serves as the symbolic presence of the power the warden holds and is a constant reminder that the prisoners could be watched at any time. This correlates to the various forms of propaganda and use of surveillance technology in Oceanic society, and the modern world. The one-way mediums used to look out from the tower onto the occupants of the cells closely mirror the telescreens and various apparatuses used to surveil the population of

Oceania. Finally, the walls and structure of the Panopticon mirror the isolation that is felt within Oceanic society, especially the highly scrutinized middle class. These comparisons all come together to form a direct correlation between the Panopticon, Jeremey Bentham's design for the perfect prison/hospital/schoolhouse/workhouse, and George Orwell's predictive text *1984*. Orwell's text serves, in turn, as a warning for those who read it. It is an omen for the subjugation of the world's citizenry and offers a glimpse into the horrible reality that awaits those who remain ignorant to the corruption that exists "within the tower."

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Life Was Perilous: Women's Lives in Medieval and Early Modern Europe

Kaitlyn Jackson

Women's roles did not remain stagnant in the sole positions of daughter, mother, wife, and homemaker throughout the time from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern Era. Though women's lives during this time were strictly regulated and largely confined within the sphere of domesticity, there were women who stepped beyond the set boundaries of society to pave the way for advancement in future generations. Women's roles did not change suddenly. Gradually women took control of the opportunities around them in order to better themselves, as women had before them and would continue to do after them. This paper will explore the ways in which female roles changed, through the analysis of written accounts regarding exceptional women who defied all odds against them. Specifically, this paper will focus on increasing education opportunities, the use of religion as a source of empowerment rather than a hindrance, the manipulation of gender to be utilized as a weapon, the ability to control or reject marital status, the roles of women outside of the home, and conscious empowerment of women by women. To support these claims, this paper will employ excerpts from the following books: *The King's Midwife, The Handless Maiden, Marriage Wars in Late Renaissance Venice, Nails in the Wall, The Trial of Mary Queen of Scots,* and *Sisters and Workers.* Additional support will come from the movies *Dangerous Beauty* and *The Virgin Queen*, as well as primary sources in the *Legacies of the Reformation*.

To begin, during the Middle Ages and most of the Early Modern period education was a luxury rather than a right, especially in regard to women. Society during this time did not find it important for women, who were normally wives, to be able to read or write. However, as time progressed toward 1750, societal shifts increasingly made education a necessity rather than a luxury, which enabled women of several demographics throughout multiple countries to gain access to some form of education during this period. In the case of "The Female University Student in Krakow" from the text *Sisters and Workers,* the young woman gained an education through disguising herself as a male and attending classes at a university—which were typically all male during this time.[1] Once she was discovered, the woman was not punished for her deception or

[1] Michael H. Shank, "A Female University Student in Late Medieval Krakow" in *Sisters and Workers in the Middle Ages,* ed. Judith Bennett, Elizabeth Clark, Jean O'Barr, Anne Vilen, and Sarah Westphal-Wihl (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 191.

accumulated education but was instead granted the highest female leadership position at a convent.[2] Yet, that woman was an exception for she came from a wealthy family and had acted so that no person could question her honor.[3] In contrast to the female university student, the film *Dangerous Beauty* detailed Veronica Franco's education in literature, politics, and writing, after she gave up a conventional role within the home and accepted her position as a courtesan.[4] Franco's education also came from exceptional circumstance, for had she lived anywhere but Venice she would have never been granted the opportunity to become one of the first women poets to have her work published in the city.[5]

After the Protestant Reformation in 1517, the idea that every person should be able to read The Bible for themselves circulated. This shift correlated with the erection of girls' schools, which can be seen in the texts *Nails in the Wall* and *The Handless Maiden*. In *Nails in the Wall* by Amy Leonard, Catholic nuns in Strasbourg Germany are tasked by the local Protestant authorities to teach the girls of the town how to read.[6] A similar situation occurs in *The Handless Maiden* by Mary Perry, when Morisco children, including girls, were provided an education by the Jesuit missionaries. The aim of both institutions was to strengthen religious faith by permitting children to read the Christian Bible for themselves, and it was an inadvertent effect that these actions furthered the education of these female children.[7]

While the ability to read and write are fundamentals of education, in France in the Early Modern Era, a midwife commissioned by King Louis XV taught women of France a different skill. Madame Du Coudray was sent to many towns and villages in France to teach women how to successfully birth infants in order to combat France's high infant mortality rate.[8] Du Coudray published medical textbooks and invented an interactive "machine" to further aid her students in comprehending the birthing process.[9] While Du Coudray's position came from exceptional circumstances, her students were average women of France, and her teaching was not exclusive to the rich or extremely honorable. As evidenced in the situations above, education for women

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[2] Ibid, 192.
[3] Ibid, 194.
[4] *Dangerous Beauty,* directed by Marshall Herskovitz (1998), film.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Amy Leonard, *Nails in the Wall* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 90-91.
[7] Mary Elizabeth Perry, *The Handless Maiden* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), 70.
[8] Nina Rattner Gelbart, *The King's Midwife* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 92.
[9] Ibid, 62-63.

eventually became obtainable without unique circumstances or concealment of their sex, though it took hundreds of years to achieve.

A second change that had affected the lives and roles of women was the shift from religion as a hindrance to a source of empowerment. Religion was a vital aspect of life during the Middle Ages and Early Modern Era. Catholicism, which was the most prominent religion in Europe prior to 1517, had long been a limiting and demonizing governing body in regard to women, a prejudice upon which the post-1517 Protestants built. However, gradually, religion became a major source of empowerment for women during this period, being used to justify actions in opposition of, rather than in compliance with, society. Religion slowly became an empowering force, beginning with Catholic nuns and female mystics. Joan of Arc was a well-known female warrior, but she was also a mystic—a person who claimed to have a connection to God through visions or voices. Joan's claim to the King of France, that she had "come and [was] sent on the part God to bring help to you and your kingdom" convinced the King to entrust Joan of Arc with a position within his military—which had previously been exclusively male.[10] Her empowerment through her connection to God permitted her a masculine role and semblance of authority, which fifteenth-century society would otherwise deem impossible for women. Like Joan of Arc, the nuns in Strasbourg Germany, detailed in the text *Nails in the Wall*, clung to their religious calling from God after leaders of the newly founded Protestant faith took control of their city. The Strasburg nuns rejected Protestant demands to forgo their faith and leave their convents in adherence to their religious beliefs. The women believed that their calling from God was more important than the demands of men, as the Abbess Susanna Braun stated: "One must be more obedient to God than men."[11]

Similar to the empowerment Joan and the Strasbourg nuns found in the Catholic faith, women of the Protestant faith also gained strength from their religion. Women, like Katharina Schutz Zell, Argula von Grumbach, and Ursala of Munsterberg, spoke in favor of the Protestant faith and denounced the actions of the Catholic Church which they viewed as corrupt.[12] Their newfound religion enabled them to be outspoken critics of the Catholic Church, which they had originally been a part of, and its male leaders. Additionally, the Protestant faith held the belief that

[10] Sullivan, Karen. *The Interrogation of Joan of Arc* (University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 24.
[11] Amy Leonard, *Nails in the Wall* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 133.
[12] Merry Wiesner-Hanks and Peter Matheson. *Legacies of the Reformation*, 275-277.

every person, regardless of gender or class, should be able to read The Bible for themselves which in turn promoted education for females.

Following the Protestant Reformation, the Catholic Church underwent reforms itself. The product of that Counter-Reformation is evidenced in the text *Marriage Wars in Late Renaissance Venice* in the application of the rulings of the Council of Trent.[13] Venetian women used the guidelines of a legal marriage outlined in Trent to obtain separations, divorces, and annulments.[14] The women would rehearse scripts that described cruel and unwanted marriages that had been forced upon them violently to release themselves from the situation. The empowerment that came from the ruling at Trent allowed women to manipulate circumstances in order to escape dangerous or undesired marriages.[15] The Virgin Queen, Elizabeth Tudor, also manipulated the religious construct of virginity, and the sacredness placed upon it, to strengthen her rule in England and justify her decision to remain unmarried.[16] Elizabeth reminded those that doubted her that she was a virgin and thus able to deny her feminine lust, which religious organizations believed plagued all women following the fall from Eden.

Christianity was not the only empowering religion during the Middle Ages to the Early Modern Period. Moriscos in Spain after the Reconquista were subjugated to punishment for their culture and faith. Several Moriscan women were sentenced to wear the sanbenito during the Inquisition, and in turn they made bold requests of the Inquisitors.[17] One Morisca requested another of the penitential garments for her son because he was cold, while another requested a second sanbenito because her's had worn out.[18] Their subtle attempts to ridicule the power of the Inquisition were especially audacious during this time. Thus, it can be seen that religion—not just Christianity—had become a source of empowerment among women from 1200 to 1750. Religion motivated women of differing religious backgrounds to act or speak in defense of or adherence to their beliefs, despite society's expectations of submission and obedience to the men and societies they challenged.

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[13] Joanna M. Ferraro, *Marriage Wars in Late Renaissance Venice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 20.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid, 35.
[16] Jayne Lewis, *The Trial of Mary Queen of Scots* (Boston: Bedford/St.Martin's, 1999), 3.
[17] Mary Elizabeth Perry, *The Handless Maiden* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), 83.
[18] Ibid.

As glimpsed in the actions of Elizabeth Tudor and the Venetian women mentioned above, during the period from 1200 to 1750 there was an increase in women who did not allow gender stereotypes to influence their lives. Instead, many women manipulated society's stereotypes in order to achieve their own goals. One example of a group that manipulated gender stereotypes were the nuns of Strasbourg Germany during the early years of the Protestant Reformation. The nuns manipulated society's idea of submissive feminine nature and female tendency toward obedience to elicit money from the town, which supposedly motivated them to leave their faith.[19] However, the nuns would take the money and leave to join another convent in a different town.[20] The Venetian women of *Marriage Wars in Late Renaissance Venice* also manipulated the tropes of feminine nature in order to gain release from unwanted marriages. They clung to the scripts which employed the ideas of honorable daughters being threatened and coerced by their fathers to marry an unworthy husband who did not care for her.[21] In *The Trial of Mary Queen of Scots,* Mary Stuart relied upon her feminine nature for sympathy during her trial, using tears to paint herself as a martyr for her religion rather than a conspiring traitor.[22] Similarly, her cousin Elizabeth Tudor had used her feminine love for her kin as support for her delaying Mary's execution months later.[23] The midwife Du Coudray also employed this technique in certain situations. Though Du Coudray used masculinity more often than femininity, when Du Coudray's motives were questioned she reverted to a feminine submissive nature to support her actions by claiming she only took the role upon herself for the good of France and at the behest of her King.[24] The women mentioned above did not simply let gender stereotypes stand. These women took societal notions and opportunities and manipulated them in order to achieve their own goals.

Marriage had long been an institution not for love, but for political and economic alliances between families. During this time women began to take control of their marriages, rather than being left at the mercy of their fathers and husbands. In fact, some women even defied the feminine expectation of domesticity and maternity by rejecting marriage completely. In *Nails in the Wall* the nuns of Strasburg rejected the Protestant leaders' attempts to marry them off, for Protestants

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[19] Amy Leonard, *Nails in the Wall* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 71.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Joanna M. Ferraro, *Marriage Wars in Late Renaissance Venice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 35.
[22] Jayne Lewis, *The Trial of Mary Queen of Scots* (Boston: Bedford/St.Martin's, 1999), 29.
[23] Ibid, 30.
[24] Nina Rattner Gelbart, *The King's Midwife* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 101-102.

placed more importance on females as wives and mothers than virgins and nuns. The nuns rejected marriage by claiming they could not all marry, for there were more nuns than eligible men.[25] In contrast, Katharina Schutz Zell was one of the first women to marry a priest during the Protestant Reformation.[26] Katharina, in defiance of the Catholic Church and its rulings, married a Protestant Priest, taking control of her faith and marriage in one fell swoop.[27]

Like the nuns, Elizabeth Tudor also rejected marriage. As seen in the film *The Virgin Queen*, as well as the text *The Trial of Mary Queen of Scots*, Elizabeth is at first pressured to marry and produce an heir for England.[28] However, Elizabeth defies this expectation, claiming she will remain a virgin for the entirety of her life and that she is married to her country.[29] *Marriage Wars in Late Renaissance Venice* detailed the use of The Council of Trent to escape cruel or unwanted marriages, often through the use of scripts.[30] Unlike her cousin, Mary Stuart obeys the conventions of society for most of her life, and while Elizabeth's defiance made her a stronger leader, Mary's acceptance of her marital expectations made her rule weaker.[31] Yet, Mary eventually disregards conventions and elopes, which only serves to further weaken her unstable rule in Scotland.[32]

Venetian women in the mid-1500s, after the Council of Trent, also gained control of their marital status. These women manipulated events and circumstance to end unwanted marriages, using scripts, death, and biased witnesses to achieve their goals.[33] Key to this were the guidelines of legal marriage dictated in the rulings of The Council of Trent, which enabled them to control their own marital status for economic gains or to merely achieve a stable living environment.[34] Women during this time were gaining control of their lives through the manipulation of ideas or laws, rejecting misery in the marriages their male counterparts arranged for them.

A fifth change during this period was that women were increasingly leaving the domestic sphere to pursue tasks outside of the home. Although women were expected by most governing

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[25] Amy Leonard, *Nails in the Wall* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 71.
[26] Katharina Schutz Zell. *Apologia for Master Matthew Zell: Clerical Marriage 1524.*
[27] Ibid.
[28] *The Virgin Queen,* directed by Coky Giedroyc (2005)
[29] Ibid.
[30] Joanna M. Ferraro, *Marriage Wars In Late Renaissance Venice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 35.
[31] Jayne Lewis, *The Trial of Mary Queen of Scots* (Boston: Bedford/St.Martin's, 1999), 13.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Joanna M. Ferraro, *Marriage Wars In Late Renaissance Venice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 35.
[34] Ibid, 53,

bodies of society to be submissive wives, whose main task was to provide heirs, many women rejected these conventions to become monarchs, midwives, and teachers. Women in both *Sisters and Workers in the Middle Ages* and *The King's Midwife* left the home to serve as midwives in the medical field. These women were mainly limited within the medical profession to women's health issues, however, there were women that were surgeons and doctors for men.[35] However, even in their roles as midwives these women surpassed bounds placed upon them, especially in the case of the midwife commissioned by King Louis XV—Madame Du Coudray. Du Coudray was permitted by her role to travel extensively throughout France, to teach other women in her methods, and to publish academic textbooks.[36] A second group of women who acted outside of the home were nuns in both *Nails in the Wall* and *Sisters and Workers in the Middle Ages.* These religious women defied norms by neglecting marriage and domesticity, choosing instead to remain virgins for the entirety of their lives. Nuns, like those in Strasbourg, often left the cloistered convent to perform charitable acts within the community. Additionally, the Nuns in Strasburg were given the role of teachers by the local Protestant leaders.[37] Their role as teachers enabled them to have a broader impact on the lives of their female students, whereas if they had become wives and mothers their influence would have been limited to their direct family.

An additional woman who overstepped these bounds was Queen Elizabeth Tudor of England. The film *The Virgin Queen* shows Elizabeth Tudor as a Queen in her own right, not the consort or wife of a King, but an independent female ruler.[38] Elizabeth denied sharing her authority with any man, and thus adopted the identity of a virgin to add legitimacy to her rule. Women had various roles outside of their homes, from midwives to female religious warriors. During this time period women's horizons were beginning to broaden beyond the four walls of their home. Yet, there were consequences for these women. The nuns on Strasbourg were more strictly confined to their convent, rather than being permitted to act in outside communities. For Elizabeth Tudor and Du Coudray, positions in a male-dominated society were accompanied by a redefinition of femininity due to a pressure to be more masculine—one that rejected male-defined femininity

[35] Monica Green. "Women's Medical Practice and Health Care in Medieval Europe" in *Sisters and Workers in the Middle Ages* ed. Judith Bennett, Elizabeth Clark, Jean O'Barr, Anne Vilen, and Sarah Westphal-Wihl (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 46.
[36] Nina Rattner Gelbart, *The King's Midwife* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 72.
[37] Amy Leonard, *Nails in the Wall* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 90-91.
[38] *The Virgin Queen,* directed by Coky Giedroyc (2005)

which was associated with weakness, emotions, and lust. Women that occupied a position that was deemed masculine by society had to neglect their own femininity to gain legitimacy.

Finally, women during the period from 1200 to 1750, made conscious decisions to empower other women, which often meant defying the force governing them whether it be society, the Church, the local government, or their family. Following the Protestant Reformation, Marie Dentiere wrote on the topic of women preachers.[39] With all the religious changes, she challenged the constraints put upon women by both Catholic and Protestant faiths, that prohibited them from spreading the word of Christianity. Marie consciously advocated for the advancement of women into a male role, against the opinions of the Christian sects.[40] Madame Du Coudray's niece was similar in this way. Unlike her aunt, she advocated midwifery as a role that should be exclusive to women.[41] She believed that women were more fitting for the position and should be elevated to the position, rather than the field transferring to male domination.[42] Another woman who empowered women was Madame Du Coudray. By teaching the women of France how to birth children she gave them a profitable skill that they could utilize. However, Du Coudray's empowerment was not intentional, unlike her niece.[43] Women overcame stereotypes and societal pressure to become advocates for other women to do the same, either through their words, actions, or both.

Women were not complacent within their lives during the Middle Ages to Early Modern Era. Life was a perilous adherence to the rules for these women. One foot out of line could have led to ruin, yet these women still stepped beyond that line. Extraordinary and ordinary women alike stepped beyond their given roles in society to blaze a trail to the future. What in hindsight seems like small changes compared to today's standards of equality, were monumental to the women who tried, fought, and achieved these accomplishments in history.

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[39] Merry Wiesner-Hanks. *Legacies of the Reformation*, 276.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Nina Rattner Gelbart, *The King's Midwife* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 246-247.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid, 92.

"The Yellow Wallpaper": Coloring the Borders of First-Wave Feminism

Emma Turner

Among the canonical authors of the nineteenth century, none had such a direct influence on the execution of first wave feminism ideals as Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Although she may not have known her short story's true power at the time, "The Yellow Wallpaper" became a beacon for nineteenth and early twentieth century women transitioning out of domestic lifestyles and into the work force. The short story she composed is loosely based on her own experiences with the patriarchy and how this societal system impacted her life. Charlotte Perkins Gilman developed her political ideologies through life experiences that would later inspire her to create feminist literature, which would be studied for years to come. Within one of her most memorable literary pieces, "The Yellow Wallpaper," Gilman depicts the transition of the narrator's point of view from conformity to resistance of set patriarchal gender norms during the nineteenth century, as also demonstrated through the contemporaneous development of first-wave feminism.

To understand the origins of "The Yellow Wallpaper" and the identity of Charlotte Perkins Gilman herself, it is important to know what factors influenced its creation, and specifically what biographical experiences prompted Gilman to write her famous short story. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's impact within first-wave feminism is profound. Her influence can perhaps be best summarized in the closing words of one of her letters to her first husband, in which she separated herself from the domestic identity that came with marrying a man. She wrote, "Truly I am in appearance a lady, in nature a woman, but first and always Charlotte A. Perkins" (Davis 62). Within her personal identity, she also exemplified her own idea of a woman who supported herself, which would later be seen through her political beliefs and her writing. Much like her writing, the woman behind the fiction was truly indescribable, but the life experiences that shaped that woman were not always pleasant. For instance, Gilman struggled in her relationship with her father, who abandoned her family shortly after the death of her baby sister, Julie De Wolf Perkins, in January 1866. She often wrote letters to her father, for which she would never receive a response. When Gilman received the opportunity to greet her father in person at the Boston Public Library, her father, Frederic, turned her away due to the emotional state in which she greeted him (Davis 21). Charlotte was excited to greet the estranged father she remembered from her childhood but was denied a father even as an adult.

The absence of Frederic Perkins in Charlotte's life inspired some of her earliest works, such as her poem, "The Nurse and the Snake." Gilman's mother became the sole head of household and worked hard to support the family, often resulting in Charlotte and her brother, Thomas, being uprooted from any sense of normalcy they developed because the family had to move so often. As the breadwinner and single parent of the household, Gilman's mother, Mary Perkins, took on the role of mother and father (Davis 29). This likely instilled an early notion of female independence, a precursor for first-wave feminism, in young Charlotte's head. From an early age, it was clear that Charlotte Perkins Gilman could not count on the men in her life to be trustworthy and constant fixtures, so she learned to support herself.

Charlotte's role as a daughter in a patriarchal society influenced her hesitance towards becoming a wife when she was an adult. Gilman met her first husband, Charles Walter Stetson, at his lecture on etching at an art club Charlotte participated in on January 11, 1882. Charles was an artist with an intent to receive recognition in the art world. Charlotte admired Charles for his work as an artist, and he admired her for her work as a writer, although it was still early in her career. After a short period of courting and some reluctance on her part, Charlotte accepted Charles' proposal for marriage, despite her apprehension towards her intended husband and the couple's financial situation. Charlotte believed that she had to fulfill set societally expected domestic duties of a woman in order to carry out what she had been taught was her natural purpose. As a woman in nineteenth-century society she was expected to become a wife and to bear children, a social pressure which played a role in her acceptance of the marriage proposal. The couple struggled financially, resulting in the delaying of their wedding for a little over four years (Davis 63). Because of this, Charlotte pursued her own endeavors in creating art and literature.

In their relationship, Charles became frustrated with Charlotte's desire to put her work before her family, which only consisted of him at the time. Charlotte herself became frustrated with expectations of cooking and cleaning, or the general housekeeping duties that were seemingly being forced upon her. She became so distraught with these expectations that at one point she asked if the couple could live in two separate houses and still be married so as not to live to serve what she saw as her husband's every whim (Davis 63). Nancy Theriot, who writes about social expectations of the nineteenth century, says women, "…were raised with a feminine ideology that stressed that suffering and self-abnegation necessarily accompanied the domestic life and that willingness to suffer was the feminine avenue to fulfillment." (114). Charlotte Perkins Gilman saw

that this was a challenge she had to face and a life she would be expected to suffer, but she refused to take on the role without resistance.

One example of Charlotte's disdain towards her impending marriage was demonstrated through her painting, "The Woman Against the Wall." The painting, which is now lost, showed a woman, battered in appearance, who had traversed through a rugged landscape to encounter a wall that stretched endlessly across the land, blocking her from whatever was on the other side (Davis 72). This was how Gilman felt as she prepared to take on the role of wife. She was meeting an obstacle she felt would be difficult to overcome. This painting also created a parallel for the short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper," she would later write.

Charlotte believed her work as an independent woman would soon be overshadowed by her place as Charles' wife and eventually as the mother of his child. Despite more financial setbacks, the couple married on May 2, 1884. In August of 1884, Charlotte became pregnant with her daughter Katherine Beecher Stetson. With her pregnancy came terrible sickness caused by a uterine prolapse and nausea that was aggravated by medication (Davis 79). Her turbulent pregnancy was indicative of the barriers she would face after giving birth as well, including nervous exhaustion. Her condition, which today would be known as postpartum depression, inspired the narrator whom the story centers around in Gilman's short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper." However, it is likely that Gilman suffered from clinical depression throughout her life and the birth of her daughter only intensified the effects of her condition. Gilman believed her state after pregnancy was caused by "… environmental influences and particularly the home's degenerative effect" (Davis 84). During the time of her worst bout with her mental health, Walter appeared to be absent in Charlotte's life, caring more about his daughter and his work than about Charlotte's well-being. Furthering her discontent, Charlotte resented that she could not hold a job outside the home while her husband could (Davis).

Charlotte began to recover from postpartum depression in September of 1885 when she received a small separation from her family while on a trip to Pasadena, California, with her close friend Grace Chunning. She spent those few months traveling the western half of the United States and enjoying her independence from marriage once again. Charlotte returned to her husband and child on March 28, 1886, almost seven months after leaving. Dissatisfied with the state of her relationship upon returning, Charlotte and Walter separated in 1890 (Davis 95). During the time

she had spent with her husband upon her return, her state of depression recurred, mirroring how she had felt before, if not worse.

After leaving her husband, Charlotte spent a short amount of time in a Philadelphia sanitarium. Her doctor during her time in the hospital was considered one of the best specialists of his time, although he had a cruel, calculating disposition. Gilman was put on rest cure by Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, notably similar to the treatment recommended for the narrator in "The Yellow Wallpaper." She was prohibited to, "…sit up, or to sew or write or read, or to use the hands in any active way except to clean the teeth," (Davis 96). Dr. Mitchell believed that steady brain use had the power to cripple a woman's health, and therefore, it was not safe for her to think for herself (Davis 97). Patients were not allowed to discuss their conditions for fear of perpetuating their platform for the illness. This notion is seen in "The Yellow Wallpaper" when the narrator is forbidden from writing by her husband, who is also a doctor, and the character's husband also insinuates his wife's sickness is of her control (Gilman).

Ultimately, Charlotte Perkins Gilman was diagnosed with hysteria, a disease that she would never be "cured" of, since it is the equivalent of depression, anxiety, and other mental health disorders that were misunderstood in the nineteenth century. She was released from the sanitarium on June 1, 1887. It was after her stay at the sanitarium and encounters with Dr. Mitchell that Gilman composed her short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper" within two days of her release. As she had so long sought to do, Charlotte legally divorced Walter in 1894 (Davis 159). The impact of her first marriage and time in the sanitarium had on her writing is unparalleled and led to one of the most iconic feminist literary pieces of the nineteenth century.

The publication date of "The Yellow Wallpaper" occurs at a significant period in American women's history. The nineteenth century marked the beginning of first-wave feminism in the United States. The first-wave of feminism began forming in the 1840s and 1850s. In the midst of the first-wave feminism movement, "The Yellow Wallpaper" was published in May of 1892. Like Gilman, many women began to assert that they could have a greater role in society than that of a housewife dominated by and subservient to the ambition and will of the men in their lives, whether that be a husband, brother, or father. Forty-five years prior to the publication of Gilman's short story, women who shared the same feminist ideas as Charlotte met to discuss the subject of women's rights in Seneca Falls, New York. The Seneca Falls Convention, led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, was the event that spearheaded the feminist movement. One of the earliest missions and

the most recognizable emphasis of the first-wave feminism movement was to gain suffrage for women, although it would not be gained until almost 30 years after the publishing of "The Yellow Wallpaper" (Kelly 556).

The first-wave feminism movement was directly influenced by the participation of women belonging to the middle, working, and upper classes of society. Women in the West also contributed much to the movement because most western states had already given women the right to vote (Cobble 181). Women of color, such as Sojourner Truth, joined the women's movement in addition to advocating for the abolition of slavery, since the antislavery movement in many ways was the mother of the feminist movement, due to its establishment of political activism in women's communities and groups. Women in the first-wave feminist movement sought the power to change unjust laws, improve education, and eliminate barriers for women in public life (Kelly 556). Issues such as temperance and domestic duties were also a major focus of the women who joined these movements (Cobble 139). Women across the nation joined the first-wave feminist movement for a variation of reasons, but were concerned about the same issues of inequality and dissatisfaction that Charlotte Perkins Gilman observed.

During this period of first-wave feminism, Charlotte Perkins Gilman specifically focused on promoting the imposition of socialist policies in the United States. Gilman sought the elimination of private housekeeping in favor of the institution of community kitchens and child care centers to lessen the homemaker burden that had been placed on women (Kelly 557). Additionally, she strongly believed in the right of women to have economic independence, meaning no woman should have to rely on a man to support her financially. Through that notion, she perpetuated the idea of a woman having a job outside of the home, which was also a focus of the first-wave feminism movement, although the second-wave would see the most success in that area during World War II. Gilman was an outspoken political activist intent on having a role in the women's movement, even if much of her power was executed through pen being put to paper. She was also active in political groups. Some of Gilman's works such as, "Women and Economics," demonstrated the extent to which she believed in an economically independent woman (Davis 212). Groups such as the Intercollegiate Socialist Society and the Equality League of Self-Supporting Women, now known as the Women's Political Union, boasted Gilman as an active member (Knight 207). Similarly, Gilman was not shy about lacing her political beliefs into her literary

works. Gilman's writing is where her influence on the first-wave feminist movement can be most greatly recognized.

Specifically, Charlotte Perkins Gilman demonstrated the extent of her feminist power through one of her most memorable creations. "The Yellow Wallpaper" is a nineteenth century short story based on the experiences of a woman who is imprisoned in her home by her husband due to a mental illness from which she suffers. The story is an allegory of nineteenth-century patriarchal norms. In the short story, the narrator begins to question the gender roles and equality in her marriage after her husband begins to dominate the care of her health. Through her short story, Charlotte Perkins Gilman creates an empowering, yet thought provoking example of a broken woman who inadvertently examines the societal expectations of women in the nineteenth century in terms of how these expectations negatively impact the health of women. The reader realizes that the narrator is entrapped in these expectations, and it can be inferred that through the narrator's sickness she gains clarity of her society and marriage.

Specifically, there are several details within "The Yellow Wallpaper" that can be analyzed and recognized as a direct rebuttal by Gilman towards patriarchal norms of the time in which she lived. In the nineteenth century, women were constricted to occupying the home. This isolation often contributed to the development or appearance of mental illness in women. The narrator of "The Yellow Wallpaper" is placed in isolation by her husband, because, as a doctor, he believes that is the best way to cure her ailment. Her ailment is described as a "temporary nervous depression—a slightly hysterical tendency" (Gilman 76). The reader is told that the narrator's husband and brother are both doctors and have each advised that she partake in the rest cure. Outside of her short story, this was the same treatment administered to Gilman to cure her of her female "hysteria." It is only one of many parallels between the author and her character.

Initially, the narrator is indifferent toward the rest cure her husband prescribes. In the short story Gilman writes, "So I take phosphates or phosphites—whichever it is, and tonics, and journeys, and air, and exercise, and am absolutely forbidden to 'work' until I am well again" (76). The main feature of the room—its yellow wallpaper—is what triggers her apprehension, furthering her sense of isolation and anxiety. It is within the narrator's isolation that she takes solace in the odd yellow, peeling wallpaper that adorns the room, which she originally is repulsed by. The fascination of the narrator with the yellow wallpaper is evident throughout the text. It is the first feature of the room that she notices upon her arrival, apart from the bed that is fastened to the floor. In fact, the narrator

begins to seek companionship from the wallpaper. She says, "There are things in the wallpaper that nobody knows but me, or ever will" (Gilman 82). Ultimately, the narrator's isolation is one of the largest factors that contributes to the onset of her madness. Additionally, the narrator's inability to articulate her unease and to effectively argue that the isolation is negatively impacting her mental health is connected to the fact that the narrator is uneducated, as women of the time were not expected to receive schooling to perform domestic duties.

The narrator's indifference is indicative of another issue of the nineteenth century: the unequal education of women. Women had to choose between obtaining an education or having a family, and due to societal expectations, it was more likely that a woman would wed and begin to have children. It is obvious that with what education the narrator does have, she wants to use it to write but is prohibited from that practice by her husband, which is a part of the notion of not allowing a woman to think to improve her mental health. It also keeps the narrator from performing an action that could potentially provide a form of solace to her. The narrator writes despite her husband instructing her not to, and this is one of the most prominent feminist actions of the short story: a nineteenth century woman having the ambition to defy her husband.

However, the narrator's defiance proves to be detrimental to her mental health. The secretive nature and forced concealment of her actions is a factor that drives the narrator mad. She must live with the fear of what her husband might say or do if he were to find her writing. In the beginning of the short story, the narrator writes, "I did write for a while in spite of them; but it does exhaust me a good deal—having to be so sly about it, or else meet with opposition" (Gilman 76). In classic patriarchal form, for a woman to defy her husband was frowned upon and it was not a behavior that was considered normal. In addition to his dominant nature, the narrator's husband is very condescending. He uses his position as a doctor against her. He says, "Can you trust me as a physician when I tell you so," in response to the narrator when she begins to argue that being locked away in the room with the yellow wallpaper is affecting her mental health (Gilman 83). Her secrecy towards her writing can be justified by the avoidance of the reprobation she would receive from her husband should he find out, a parallel to Gilman's own complex relationship with her husband and father.

The narrator's husband's domineering and patronizing nature is comparable to that of a parent. Throughout the text, not only does he direct the narrator's actions, he also demeans her through the pet names he chooses to call her. There are multiple instances where he calls her, "a

blessed little goose," (Gilman 79) or his "little girl" (Gilman 83). He also diminishes her control over her own health by suggesting, "she shall be as sick as she pleases," asserting that her poor mental health is self-inflicted (Gilman 83). The pet names he gives the narrator are names a parent would call a child, and they belittle her intelligence. He also goes so far as to perform the parent-like action of reading to her until she falls asleep after he has upset her by denying her the opportunity to leave the house. Coincidentally, the narrator also believes the room she stays in was once nursery. The narrator describes it as a "nursery first and then play-room and gymnasium, I should judge; for the windows are barred for little children, and there are rings and things in the wall" (Gilman 77). Despite the narrator's belief that the room was for children, she experiences the unadulterated effects of the patriarchy and its paternalism there.

When the yellow wallpaper itself is destroyed, it may be inferred that the ability of the patriarchy to control the narrator is also destroyed. The wallpaper is a physical representation of society and its ability to constrict the actions of women through the patriarchy. It would seem that on some level the narrator begins to become aware of this constriction as she notices the inequality of her marriage, no matter how normal that inequality was for the time period. Gilman writes, "This wallpaper has a kind of sub-pattern in a different shade, a particularly irritating one, for you can only see it in certain lights, and not clearly then" (80). This line directly reveals the complexity of the patriarchy and the situation one must be in to see and experience it. The narrator has seemingly become aware of the advantage her husband has over her, simply because he is a man. It is only now that she is in a situation where he is constantly controlling her that she has the opportunity to see this prejudice. Her frustration with the wallpaper continues, and she proclaims, "… I will follow that pointless pattern to some sort of a conclusion" (Gilman 81). The narrator does, in fact, reach a conclusion.

At the end of the story, the narrator is completely overcome by the independence she has gained by her contemplation of the yellow wallpaper. From a feminist perspective, the story may be interpreted to reveal that the narrator has become aware of the patriarchy and all the women who are affected by it. In fact, she reverses certain roles that were being entertained in her marriage, such as her husband's parental attitude towards her. For instance, the narrator begins to refer to her husband as, "young man" (Gilman 89). She also begins to take on a calm demeanor, while her husband slips into a state of panic mirroring how he perceived his wife to act earlier in the story. The narrator boldly proclaims, "I've got out at last in spite of you and Jane. And I've pulled off

most of the paper, so you can't put me back" (Gilman 89). In response, her husband faints, which would be considered a very feminine reaction. The narrator begins to creep along the wall of the room and has to crawl over her husband who lies unconscious in her path. Through this action, the narrator is physically overcoming the patriarchy, represented by her husband who lies below her.

Ultimately, Charlotte Perkins Gilman shaped her short story "The Yellow Wallpaper" around her own life experiences and created a narrator who begins to resist the patriarchal structure of her time. This resistance is similar to the behavior of women who were joining the first-wave feminist movement that spanned the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which coincided with the short story's publishing date. "The Yellow Wallpaper" served as a medium for Gilman to express her frustration with the world's views on women and to engage with feminist ideas and themes. Through her short story, Charlotte Perkins Gilman provides a glimpse into one of the earliest feminist movements and a personal account of the damaging control of the patriarchy.

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Capes, Cowls, and Connotations

Emily Wood

The superhero genre is meant to be a statement of optimism about the nature of humanity and its capacity for selflessness and altruism. However, superheroes in media have always been a reflection of the times, and in their modern incarnations they are missing the optimism vital to the very nature of superheroism. Much philosophical debate, going back to Plato, centers on the nature of human morality and ethics. Despite the current Dark Age of comics emphasizing violence and grittier characters, the superhero genre presents an overwhelmingly positive and optimistic viewpoint, stating that there are good people who, when given power, will altruistically use it for the good of others.

In Plato's *Republic*, the Ring of Gyges is a mythological artifact that grants any wearer the ability to become invisible. The hypothetical existence of Gyges's Ring proposes an interesting moral point: *If you had the power to get away with anything, what would you do with it?* The presumption being, of course, that most people would serve only the self and use it to practice lawlessness and avoid prosecution. This assumption paints a picture of humanity as a selfish species with only thoughts for the wellbeing of each individual and, in turn, Plato extends this notion to the morals of the species as a whole. Similarly, but more relevant to today's popular culture, is the literary concept of "What You Are In The Dark." It refers to a circumstance in which a character is given the choice to do something corrupt from which they will reap great benefits; they are aware that no one will know what choice they make. The superhero genre contextualizes a pointed counter-proposal to the philosophical concept of the Ring of Gyges. The superhero genre puts forth that when a good person finds him/herself in the unique binary position of possessing both power and anonymity, they will choose to do good.

Throughout their long history, superheroes have often been utilized as vehicles for ideological and/or political commentary, from the iconic image of Captain America punching Hitler in the face back in 1941 (courtesy of Jack Kirby) to Frank Miller's controversial *Holy Terror* (a self-contained comic published in 2011 written for the sole purpose of fear-mongering and encouraging anti-Islamic sentiments). However, one might recall the happy-go-lucky nature of comics back in the days of Adam West's *Batman* and George Reeve's *The Adventures of Superman*, and, looking at the dark and gritty heroes of today, one might wonder what exactly changed.

The history of superhero comics has four distinct eras, as outlined by Roz Kaveney in her book *Superheroes! Capes and Crusaders in Comics and Films*. According to Kaveney, in the beginning came the Golden Age of Comic Books. This was a time period in comic book history that was heralded by the creation of Superman and spanned the late 1930s to the late 1940s (18). It was the first big "boom" in the comic book industry, and it was in this time that modern comic books were first published and experienced a rapid climb in popularity. DC Comics went on to put out characters and titles such as *Batman and Robin*, *Wonder Woman*, *The Flash*, *Green Lantern*, *Aquaman*, and others. The fact that this occurred during the same time as World War II was no coincidence. It made for cheap, portable escapist entertainment for troops; for those back home, seeing brave heroes fighting in red, white, and blue (and some, like Captain America, directly taking on the Axis Powers themselves) inspired patriotism and fervor. However, after the war, enthusiasm for superhero comics waned in the late 1940s as comics turned more toward humor and detective stories.

Trends continued in this manner until 1956, during which began the Silver Age of Comic Books. This coincided closely with the implementation of the Comics Code Authority in 1954, which closely regulated the content after superhero comics had been blamed for a recent rise in juvenile crime statistics (Kaveney 105). It is during the Silver Age that the superhero genre began to gain shape and substance and world-building became a key factor. This was the era that gave us the *Justice League* and the *Fantastic Four*. Characters became less a product of their time and more a product of their genre. However, as these characters gained a world, they appeared to lose a good deal of logic in the meantime. The stories were often ludicrous, power limitations were laughably inconsistent, and plot development rare. Due to misconceptions from the Comics Code Authority, most comics had to be written with young children in mind, and thus rendered them childish. Morals were to be obstinately black and white. This is the era that gave birth to Adam West's *Batman* series. Another major talking point was science, as the Silver Age coincided with the Space Race. However, most comic book writers are not scientists, and thus we had instances of people getting superpowers from radiation instead of cancer, and the like. Yet, with skilled writers unable to write the plots in a mature fashion, several of them, including the famous Jack Kirby, instead turned their pens on the characters themselves. In the later years, stories found heroes battling personal demons as well as Kite-Man, Captain Nazi, and Crazy Quilt. Many of the biggest names in the genre came from this period, such as *Spider-Man*, *The Avengers*, and the *X*-

Men. In a roundabout way, thanks to the Comics Code Authority, this is where superheroes first became utilized as a social platform.

The Bronze Age began in the 1970s, and in the post-Vietnam era, stories became darker and more sophisticated, dealing with modern issues and social revolutions that matched the current American climate. While the characterization-heavy stories from the Silver Age remained, the plots themselves changed drastically. Stories involving modern, real-world issues like drugs, racism, poverty, abuse, and pollution flourished while the frivolousness of the Silver Age took a back seat. The Comics Code Authority also loosened their grip on the industry around this time, allowing for more stories directed at older audiences. This allowed for nuance and exploration of themes that previously were unavailable; heroes began to question their own moral codes, challenge those in authority, and make difficult choices regarding what is right and what is easy. This was a polarizing time in America, and the comics reflected that. In *Black Comics: Politics of Race and Representation* (22-29), Ronald L. Jackson illustrates how the Civil Rights Movement gave us characters like Black Panther, a prince with mystical powers and the first black hero in mainstream comics, as well as Luke Cage, a black superhero who is immune to bullets. The Stonewall Riots and the newly emerging LGBT social movement gave us the now common praxis of using the struggles of mutant-kind (like the X-Men) as an allegory for homosexuality (22-29).

Lastly comes the Iron Age of Comic Books, which we are currently in. Unlike the eras preceding it, this one does not have a specific, easily outlined formula, but is instead split into two separate factions: The Dark Age and The Modern Age, both of which are still continuing to this day. The Dark Age is generally agreed to have begun around 1986, near the tail end of the Cold War, when Americans were restless and dissatisfied. Comics were pushed to be darker and edgier than they had ever been. There was an increased focus on sex, violence, and darker, grittier character reinterpretation, sometimes at the expense of the characters themselves. Some titles flourished. The *Batman* comics found a successful niche to occupy in the darker tones of the era, with standout successes such as Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Rises* (which would go on to inspire the successful film of the same name), Alan Moore's *Watchmen* franchise (a clever and poignant deconstruction of the genre as a whole), and Moore's much-celebrated *V for Vendetta*, which explores the darker implications of unrestrained vigilantism.

However, not all titles fared so well. This era brought us the death of Superman, Marvel's *Civil War* (a violent, world-spanning engagement over vigilante politics between every Marvel-

licensed hero) and the subsequent death of Captain America. There was a gradual genre-spanning breakdown of heroes from firm, upstanding good people with strong moral fiber into thuggish murderers little better than the villains they fought. Misogyny in comics took a violent uptick in this era as well, with women dying in messy and unnecessarily sexualized ways to further the plots of male characters. In an attempt to appeal to more mature audiences by writing darker and edgier stories, comic book creators began to alienate their fanbase with the excessively dark material. These comics remain highly contested among fans today due to their excessively negative tones. These kinds of stories persist well into the present day. Frank Miller's *Holy Terror* came out in 2011, and as recently as 2016, Nick Spencer's *Captain America: Steve Rogers* made the dramatic reveal that Captain America was secretly a Nazi, for no discernable reason other than manufactured grit and shock value.

The Modern Age, running parallel to the Dark Age, began in the late 1990s. This era in superhero media has been referred to by some as a renaissance of sorts. In an attempt to push back on the bitter, dreary flavor of the Dark Age, the Modern Age features stories that accumulate the brightest features from each era: the imagination and fun of the Silver Age, the character focus and maturity of the Bronze Age, and even parts of the introspective, clever writing from the Dark Age, all tethered by the hope and unity of The Golden Age.

As previously stated, the superhero genre contextualizes a pointed counter-proposal to the philosophical concept of Gyges' Ring. The superhero genre posits that when a good person finds themselves in the unique binary position of possessing both power and anonymity, they will choose to do good. And perhaps no hero has more famously or more lastingly embodied this idea than The Man of Tomorrow himself: Superman. While not quite the first superhero (that honor goes either to the Scarlet Pimpernel or the long-since forgotten Doctor Occult, depending on one's personal interpretation), he is undoubtedly the first codifier for the genre. The stations of canon established by Superman (the origin story, the secret identity, the iconic costume, the arch-nemesis, the "kryptonite" factor, and, of course, superpowers), are iconic staples of the genre to this very day.

Superman's origin story is well known. As a baby, he was sent to Earth by his Kryptonian parents so that he might survive the destruction of their planet. Adopted by Martha and Jonathan Kent, he is raised in the aptly-named Smallville, Kansas, discovering his powers over the course of his adolescence. Upon reaching adulthood, Clark Kent moves to the big city of Metropolis and

becomes Superman, assisted by his super strength, his x-ray vision, his invulnerability, and his ability to fly. Superman has often been criticized as boring, two-dimensional, and overpowered by critics and audiences alike, but he still remains one of the most popular and enduring characters in media. To fully understand why, one must examine him critically.

Because we are so familiar with Superman, we are somewhat dulled to what he is really doing. Here is a man with extraordinary abilities, who can do anything he wants, as there isn't really any force on Earth that could stop him; with this plethora of unstoppable power at his fingertips, he chooses first to be kind. Superman is a symbol of hope; not the hope that a hero will save you when you are in danger, the hope that evil will be punished, or the hope that good will be rewarded: Superman represents the hope that people are good. Perhaps not all people are good. Perhaps not even most people are good. But the idea of Superman, the heart behind the title, says that people can be good. It is not a cry to believe in humanity, but rather, to believe in the self. Superman may be capable of saving the world, but anyone is capable of being kind.

Perhaps that is why the recent Superman film series helmed by Zack Snyder has left many disappointed. 2013's *Man of Steel* was so desperately trying to make Superman *great*, with a relentless onslaught of religious imagery, dramatic cinematography, and grandiose shows of power, that they forgot about making him *good*. Similarly dissatisfying was the 2016 follow-up, *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice*. The appeal of Batman and Superman fighting is not just the idea of powerful characters squaring up. Batman battling Superman at its base is not that of warring men, but rather warring *ideologies*. Batman is, at his core, someone who knows intimately the worst of what humanity has to offer, but does what he does because he believes that people do not deserve to die. Superman, by contrast, has seen everything humanity has to offer, from the humblest to the most wondrous, and does what he does because he loves humanity and believes that all people deserve to live. They reconcile when they discover that, in the end, they both hold the same steadfast belief that life is precious. By removing philosophy from the story, as well as having Batman abandon his no-killing clause in a cheap attempt to make him darker and edgier, the filmmakers not only did a disservice to the characters, the fans, and the story, but also to the six other stories they attempted to cram into the movie. The films have obviously been influenced greatly by the Dark Age of Comic Books, and the creators are trying to mimic the stories that succeeded in that era while not understanding what made them great in the first place.

Similarly, Frank Miller's *All Star Batman And Robin*, takes the innocent premise of Batman adopting Dick Grayson as the first Robin in order to prevent him from going down the same vengeance driven path Batman has led, and tries to darken it to the point of absurdity. Batman murders several police officers, tortures a recently orphaned 12-year old, and nearly murders Green Lantern, all in the name of making the story darker. Inserting dark and edgy themes into a story does not make it more mature; it just affects the color palette. Mature writing makes a story more mature.

Yet some defend this Dark Age, such as William Svitavsky, who argues in his book *Ages of Heroes, Eras of Men: Superheroes and the American Experience* that the darker tone in modern comics has been a wholly positive change, and the genre must stay the path in order for the superhero genre to evolve further (181). In other words, simply because a story is dark does not mean that it is not a good story. An example is Brian Bendis's *Alias*, the story of the fallen hero Jessica Jones. If there is any such thing as a typical hero comic, *Alias* is the opposite of that. *Alias* introduces us to a Jessica Jones a month or so after the worst year of her life. Formerly the superhero known as Jewel, she was captured by a super villain with mind control abilities named the Purple Man, and suffered under his control for over a year, killing people and having her spirit uniformly crushed while trapped inside her own head. She escaped, and hung up the cape for good, choosing instead to go into business as a private investigator. *Alias* follows her struggle with survivor's guilt, autonomy, alcoholism, PTSD, and the Purple Man's attempts to find her again. The story is a clear allegory for rape, and Jessica's recovery is as important as her actions. This story is about as dark as they come, but it remains one of the best comics of all time since as dark as the story gets, it is never without hope. Jessica's struggle to reconcile the things she did against her will with the person she believed herself to be before the incident and her desperation to set things right maintain the heart of what superheroes are about.

Another game-changing story that returns Superman to his more optimistic and altruistic original is *All-Star Superman* by Grant Morrison—a warm, bittersweet anthology that touches every corner of the Superman mythos in the last few days of Superman's life. He sends his love to friends and family, but as he travels, he remains his steadfast, heroic self, doing everything from talking a young girl down from a suicide ledge to curing cancer (Svitavsky 13). The serial has a warm, loving optimistic message of peace and selflessness. Both *All-Star Superman* and *Alias*, despite both having somewhat bleak premises, are incredibly different, but both maintain a

message of lasting hope for the future; Jessica has hope for her life now that she is free, and Superman has hope that humanity will thrive even after he is gone.

The Superhero genre is meant to be one of optimism about the nature of humanity and its capacity for selflessness and altruism. However, superheroes in media have always been a reflection of the times, and in their modern incarnations are missing the optimism vital to the very nature of superheroism. Despite this, with the Modern Age becoming more and more prevalent, celebrating the optimism of the past tempered by the wisdom of the present, there is a very good chance that this, too, will change. After all, superhero stories, much like their subjects, are made to persevere.

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NOTES ON THE CONTRIBUTORS

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