

AKΦ
The Alpha Kappa Phi Review
An Annual Journal of Undergraduate
Research in the Humanities

Volume II
Spring 2016

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No thief, however skillful, can rob one of knowledge, and that is why knowledge is the best and safest treasure to acquire.

~ L. Frank Baum

The advancement and diffusion of knowledge is the only guardian of true liberty. ~ James Madison

A word after a word after a word is power. ~ Margaret Atwood

The most violent element in society is ignorance.

~ Emma Goldman



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Preface

Volume II of *The Alpha Kappa Phi Review* features the work of six Lindsey Wilson College students that range from a stylistic analysis of Jonathan Foer's fictional account of the disaster of 9/11, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*; a feminist reading of both mortal and divine women in Homer's *Iliad*, which also was presented at the Fifth Annual Women's Studies Conference in April 2016; a comparison of problematic character identity in Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr. Ripley* and Gertrude Stein's story, "Melanctha" (from her collection *Three Lives*); an analysis of Electra and her "complex" in Aeschylus's *The Choephoroi* (*The Libation Bearers*), the middle drama in his trilogy *The Oresteia*; an examination of the origins and oft controversial role of Ebonics in American public schools; and rounded out with a treatise on the equally contentious subject of alternative "Englishes" and the practice of linguistic code switching among stigmatized students in academia. It is difficult not to be impressed with the scholarly efforts of these students in the LWC English program and we are honored to publish their work.

* * *

Although he has moved on in his academic career, we are especially grateful to Dr. Paul Thifault for founding and establishing the AKΦ Review in 2015, the sole undergraduate research journal at LWC.

* * *

Research-supported essays in the field of English and in the broader Humanities such as Women's Studies and History are welcomed and encouraged from any current or recently graduated Lindsey Wilson College student. Essays should be formatted in appropriate MLA style and generally should not exceed ten pages including the Work Cited page. For more information, contact Dr. Tip H. Shanklin, Professor of English and English Program Coordinator: shanklin@lindsey.edu.

THS
April 2016

CODY BAKER

Extremely Disturbed and Incredibly Tragic: Narrative Style in Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*

What about skyscrapers for dead people that were built down? They could be underneath the skyscrapers for living people that were built up. You could bury people one hundred floors down, and a whole dead world could be underneath the living one. Sometimes I think it would be weird if there were a skyscraper that moved up and down while its elevator stayed in place...that could be extremely useful, because if you're on the ninety-fifth floor, and a plane hits below you, the building could take you to the ground, and everyone could be safe, even if you left your birdseed shirt at home.

~ Oskar Schell, from *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (3)

Those are powerful words that come from the first person narrator, Oskar Schell, in the novel *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer. Oskar's father died in one of the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001. Oskar lived in sorrow, regret, denial, and most of all, separation from his mother after his father tragically died when the tower collapsed. Oskar wanted closure with his father dying, but he did not get that because there was not a body in his dad's casket when it was put underground. Oskar felt like a victim of a tragic crime because his father was taken away from him and he did not understand why. Foer gives clues throughout the novel that reinforce the idea of being separated before the attacks and being united afterward. At times, Foer writes like Maurice Blanchot, a style of writing that seems fragmented. Foer does this to display the effect of the disaster, and how it is sudden and unfinished. With 9/11, Americans feel that the attacks on America must be relived, or reminded as if they will forget the tragic events even happened. In the novel, Oskar has photographs of the scene of the falling man from the Twin Towers. Oskar flips through the photographs many times both in the novel and the film. He flips through them in two ways; one way shows the man is falling out of the building, and one shows the man is going back into the building, as if he can rewind time.

After the attacks of September 11, 2001, Americans at the time were victims of an unspeakable crime, a crime that was so brutal that no one could fathom the idea behind it. Families were torn apart because of these shocking events that ended over two thousand lives. In both the novel and the film, Oskar, who is nine years old, and his mother were deeply affected by the attacks. Foer is displaying to his readers the effect it would have on a given family. Society would feel sorry for the child, and be very sympathetic. One could say that society felt badly for the child because he would be without a father, even though his mother was watching over him the whole time during his adventures.

When Oskar started his adventures, he had a card that he gave to everyone he encountered. The card stated his name, his cellphone and home phone listed as private. The card also said, "Inventor, jewelry designer, jewelry fabricator, amateur entomologist, Francophile, vegan, origamist, pacifist, percussionist, amateur astronomer, computer consultant, amateur archeologist, collector of: rare coins, butterflies that died natural deaths, miniature cacti, Beatles memorabilia, semiprecious stones, and other things."

Given that this is relatively in the beginning of the novel and relating it to the 9/11 disaster, Foer is exhibiting a figure that before the attacks or before Americans were interrupted, they were all many things. Americans were of all different occupations. Later towards the end of the novel, Oskar gets a different card. The card simply says, "Oskar Schell: Son." Foer here is uniting Americans, whereas at the beginning Americans were separated by occupations. Not only are Americans united as one, but also they are something stronger. Being a son would mean a family. Foer is demonstrating that after the 9/11 attacks and Americans set differences aside, they were united as one family.

The opposite of being unified is being alienated, detached, split, or broken. Foer's writing style in many parts of the novel shows a detachment from the norm. At one part of the novel, the words gradually get closer together and three and a half pages cannot be read because the pages are almost completely black because the words are on top of each other. Some pages only have one sentence located in the center of the page. Some pages are nothing but one sentence per line, and some pages are just numbers. Foer uses this style of writing to support the idea of the pain in the mind of the child, a pain that is indescribable because it is a pain that over two thousand particular families encountered. This fragmented style of writing is similar to the style of writing that Maurice Blanchot uses in *The Writing of the Disaster*. The writing style that Blanchot uses is very quick. He does not stay on the same topic for very long. He also uses bullet points instead of typical prose style. Blanchot uses the bullet style because he is demonstrating the quickness and unresolvedness of a disaster. Americans will always feel unresolved with 9/11. Americans believe they must hang signs that say "9/11: Never Forget," as if it were a possibility to forget such acts.

The attacks of 9/11 will always be remembered; Americans will never forget them. The novel ends with fifteen pages of the infamous "falling man." If the pages are flipped fast enough from the beginning, it looks like the man is defying gravity and moving upwards out of the picture. This action is a reminder to Americans that the past is the past and will always be there. Also, it shows Americans how they constantly relive the morning of September 11. This reliving and repetition goes hand in hand with what Blanchot said about the disaster, any disaster: "We [those who experience the disaster] constantly need to say (think): that was quite something (something quite important) that happened to me." He goes on to explain that it is a constant repetition in regards to those who encounter a disaster.

September 11, 2001 was a tragic day in American history. Many have memorialized the day with slogans and bumper stickers. Americans have created films, novels, and songs to display the memorialization, also. When brought in popular culture, the 9/11 attacks are often portrayed as American as the victim, and the after effects being America as the victor. Oskar from *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* was a victim of these attacks. Foer brings in many aspects to support the victimization of Oskar and America as a whole. These popular culture texts show that America was vulnerable at one time, but it will not be vulnerable again. American culture can be described as vengeful as Americans sought vengeance for the slaughter of thousands of innocent lives on that September morning. If the American government gets vengeance against those who terrorized the country, are those who were affected by the attacks able to achieve

closure because justice was served? Or should the victims of the disaster seek vengeance for what they think is plausible justice?

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EMILY GUNBERG

The Position, Influence, and Infamy of Both Mortal and Divine Women in Homer's *Iliad*

Homer's *Iliad* has been renowned throughout the centuries for its powerful battle scenes, cyclical plot lines, and the unforgettable glory of its warriors. The boundaries of humanity are stretched, and it has become an enduring demonstration both of war's bloody futility and its eternal glory. However, because of the militaristic setting of this timeless epic, women in the story occupy very limited positive roles, and often are seen as either a hindrance or the inspiration of violence. This pattern of prejudice against women and female qualities has not only influenced literature, but has also affected the way both ancient and modern cultures view femininity.

When reading the *Iliad*, it becomes clear that human women typically play one of two roles; there are some who are just seen as property, such as Chryseis and Briseis, and those who are essentially just shadowy supplements to their male counterparts, such as Andromache is to Hector. Both of these categories however seem to exist only to provide some literary device, such as moving the plot along by sparking the feud between Achilles and Agamemnon. One of the most powerful moments in the epic is when the Trojan warrior Hector returns home to his devoted wife Andromache, only to discover her distraught over the idea of his imminent return to battle, already mourning his correctly anticipated death. Instead of creating a holistic example of a realistic woman, she is present only to provide a sense of empathy for her husband Hector. Andromache represents the families destroyed by the war, and what the men in the story have to lose. While this is an important sentiment, it does not make her a real person. As expected for

a good wife during this period, Andromache exists only in relation to her husband and children.

Helen, on the other hand, has been considered a problematic character for thousands of years because in some ways she falls into both classifications, and in other ways she does not fit this mold at all. Her role in the beginnings of the war is tragically unclear; it is a matter of opinion and interpretation whether or not she gave herself to Paris voluntarily. Over the years, she has become the internationally recognized symbol for lust, greed, and the evils that accompany femininity and beauty. However, for others, she has become an emblem for victims of sexual assault as well as a heartbreaking example of the horrific results of what today is termed victim-blaming. Though this tireless debate will continue, it is apparent that she is neither a hollow prop, nor simply a figure meant to illuminate a male character. Unlike any other female character present in the story, she is given an independent, mysterious role and she is hated for it. Ultimately, she is the only woman who is depicted as a real person, with flaws, autonomy, and consequence.

The ambiguity surrounding Helen's significance extends to many other areas of study concerning Classical Greece. Scholars have debated for generations about the quality of life for women in antiquity, ranging from their social status all the way to their legal rights. Sarah Pomeroy, author of *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves* has consolidated these ideas into three distinct points of view, "Some scholars hold that women were despised and kept in Oriental seclusion, while others contend that they were respected and enjoyed freedom comparable to that of most women throughout the

centuries... still others think that women were kept secluded, but in that seclusion were esteemed and ruled the house” (Pomeroy, 58). Essentially, we are unable at this point to understand the exact nature of social life for women during this time period, and it is likely that there was some variation depending on region, family, and socioeconomic status. This means that we may never know for sure whether the way women portrayed by Homer was accurate and meant to mirror everyday life, or if it was intentionally fallacious in order to dramatize the story.

It could be possible to argue that even giving women a voice and lukewarm influence over their male counterparts made them comparatively strong female characters for Ancient Greek audiences, but it is clear that human women would never reach the level of autonomy allowed the Goddesses. It appears that immortality makes all the difference. Goddesses, such as Artemis, Athena, and Aphrodite are the driving force behind the turning tides of the war, and even participate to the point of being involved with the actual battles. This is somewhat unsurprising based on the level of influence typically attributed to goddesses in mythology, but it remains an area of fascination that women, even immortal ones, had such a heavy presence in battle, which was (and still is, to a certain degree) regarded as an exclusively masculine field.

One possible explanation for the significant female presence in this story is similar to the message behind the myth of Pandora’s Box. Like the origin story of Eve tasting the irresistible fruit of knowledge found in the Old Testament, Pandora is also to be held responsible for releasing all of the painful realities that are a part of human life. Likewise, either interpretation of the *Iliad* places the blame on a woman; either Helen

went with Paris because of insatiable lust and greed, or Aphrodite compelled this sinful behavior out of her own selfish vanity. Naturally, the original source of discord in the world is a goddess named Eris, who threw the golden apple, which inspired a beauty competition, any outcome of which would have sparked a bloody and seemingly endless war. It seems as if it is human nature to attribute strife and conflict to the very existence of women, every feminine quality dripping with the possibility of contention.

It is difficult to say which is more damaging: the compartmentalization of women as either war trophies or hysterical spouses, or the impression that all human agony and hostility is a result of feminine action. However, while human women were treated with little respect in the *Iliad*, and likely in life as well, there is a glimmer of hope that can be seen in the privilege and prowess of the goddesses and the complexity of Helen's character. Because of the long period of time which has elapsed and the reality of missing information, we will never know with absolute certainty how Ancient Greek audiences would have interpreted this work, so while women's roles in the *Iliad* are certainly controversial, it may not be entirely fair to condemn it as a misogynistic piece. Nevertheless, it does perpetuate several dangerous and unfair stereotypes that have shadowed the progress of women for thousands of years. Ultimately, we are left with one question: why isn't it possible to be "whole" as a woman without sparking arduous controversy?

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CARRIE MASON

Identity Issues in Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr. Ripley* and Gertrude Stein's "Melanctha"

"It's one of those places that are supposed to be very sophisticated and all, and the phonies are coming in the window." ~ J.D Salinger

In a world where paradigms are regularly shifted, there is an obsession with classification. Thus, there is little surprise at the volume of literary works concerned with the issues of identity, nor is there any surprise at the theories that follow suit. Identities are tragically shallow and phony things, because identity, as Judith Butler argues, is a performance. "In this sense, gender is in no way a stable identity... Rather, it is in identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*." (Butler 900). Granted, Butler is arguing that *gender* identity is merely a performance; however, I contend this theory of action creating identity can be appropriated to a much larger scale – that of the expatriate writers, exemplified in Gertrude Stein and Patricia Highsmith. Both Stein and Highsmith play with identity and performance; in "Melanctha," Stein explores identity as it relates to others, whereas Highsmith in *The Talented Mr. Ripley* focuses on class identity. Each text can be situated in the context of the complex expatriate writer.

By very definition, an expatriate writer is one who leaves their home country, opting to reside in a foreign land, such as Paris or Italy. Often, this is in pursuit of unrestricted literature or art. Americans abroad have historically been conflicted with the desire to take part in European aristocracy, unable to blend into the culture regardless of how spectacular the performance. Further, expatriates are frequently assumed to be a part of the Lost Generation, writers like Hemingway, who do not know what to do with

themselves after the war, old codes and identities shattered. Jonathan Levin defines the expatriate community as a collection of “American writers and artists who believed that Europe was better suited to their aims and taste than the United States could ever be. In, part this was because so many of those aims and tastes were deemed unconventional” (xix). This applies to Highsmith’s *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, which was written 1955, right at the beginning of the Cold War. Stein wrote *The Three Lives* in the beginnings of modern art and the breaking of traditional codes. It is important to examine the similarities and differences between these two authors, although decades apart, both deconstruct identity and comment on society with form and language.

In the search for unrestrained literary freedom, the expatriate writer experiments in unprecedented forms of literature. Which presents the problem of identification, if something has been made new, or drastically refurbished, how is it classified? For Stein, this problem is slightly eliminated, as “Melanctha” is an active reflection of Stein’s discovery of modern art, each sentence and word mimics the modernist brush stroke, to create characters and a new literary genre.

I certainly never did see no man like you, Jeff. You always wanting to have it all clear out in words always, what everybody is always feeling. I certainly don’t see a reason, why I should always be explaining to you what I mean by what I am just saying. And you ain’t got no feeling ever for me, to ask me what I meant. By what I was saying when I was so tired, that night. I never know anything right I was saying. (Stein 125)

The endless repetitions of phrases and is so stylistically simple it is actually difficult to understand the meaning of the text. Each word an experiment in linguistics attempting to redefine the value of a code, and obscuring the meaning, or identity of the text. “By combining and repeating such simple words and phrases, Stein helped reinvent the English language for the twentieth century” (Levin xvi). Through this literary modernism, Stein, like the painters who inspired her, helped challenge the previously set conventions and standards of art and literature.

Another way in which Stein flaunts canonical conventions is her deliberate lack of attribute tags. Pages of dialogue stream together with almost no signifiers as to who is speaking, forcing the reader to closely analyze the text to figure out the identity. “You ain’t got no way to understand right, how it depends what way somebody goes to look for new things, the way it makes it right for them to get excited.” “No Melanctha, I certainly never do say I understand much anybody’s got a right to think they won’t have real bad trouble...” (Stein 125). In this selection of text, there is no indication in the shift of person until the speaker is already talking, when the person is addressed by name. Without this direct personal address in the dialogue, the audience would have no signal as to who is speaking. Worth noting is that the style of the speech does not change from character to character, the words and phrases remain the same for both Jeff and Melanctha. This move is of greater importance than it appears, for Stein is suggesting that identity is fluid and we all have the same basic characteristics – it is only the performance of repetition that solidifies identity.

It is no surprise crime fiction, such as *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, is primarily concerned with identity: who is who? Unlike Stein, Highsmith's 1955 novel, *The Talented MR. Ripley*, was not heralded as a great literary experiment, but as low culture crime fiction. Often, the novel will hold a heavier weight than the film, however the 1999 adaptation of the novel held a higher weight. Edward Shannon notes, "Highsmith's longtime reputation in the United States as 'merely' a popular mystery writer complicates the equation" (17). In fact, going against the norm of the superior, Anthony's Minghella's film version garnered higher praise, celebrated as daring and complex (Shannon 17). Frank Rich, of the *New York Times Magazine*, offered a backhanded compliment, praising the film for being a clever movie "subversively disguised as a glossy high-middle brow treat" and then a mild blow by stating, the need for improvement, "...expanded by Minghella, what might have been a narrow thriller seems like a mordant recap of a classic, perhaps the classic, strain in American literature" (Rich 7).

Unfortunately, Highsmith is not unfamiliar with such compliments, she herself stating, "I never think about my place in 'literature' and perhaps I have none" (qtd. in Sutherland 577). This problem of adaptability, the ease in which the Ripley novels are translated to screen, could lead to an identity crisis, reflecting Tom's ability to adapt into other identities. According to Martin Heidegger, difference is essential to determine identity, one might easily say such a thought is pedantic; film is obviously different from novel. However, form is a vital part of the *Ripley* novel, Tom relying on such theory in order to determine the best way to steal identities. While Tom as Dickie is more palatable on the surface, (*Ripley* as film) than Tom as Tom (*Ripley* as novel), it is not who he really is.

In changing form, there is an unmistakable change of identity. Especially when considering the ambiguity of sexuality in the novel, not only with Tom, but with Dickie as well. Though Dickie is seen kissing Marge, he adamantly refuses any real love between them, telling Tom, “With me? Don’t be silly,” (Highsmith 62). With Tom, homosexuality is the undercurrent, and yet, “Tom laughed at the phrase ‘sexual deviation.’” Where was the sex? Where was the deviation? He looked at Freddie and said low and bitterly: “Freddie Miles, you’re a victim of your own dirty mind,” (Highsmith 141). As Shannon smartly notes, “These sharp character distinctions and clear-cut sexual identities are the creation of the 1990s screenwriter and director Anthony Mignhella, not the 1955 novelist Patricia Highsmith,” (18). I suspect that it would be highly unlikely for “Melanctha to be translated into film, not simply due to the nature of the plot, but because Stein is widely regarded as experimental, creating new highbrow literature, whereas Highsmith has only garnered more respect in recent years.

Another key difference in form is that while Stein’s endless repetitions of the same codes solidify identity, Highsmith’s repetitions take on different formats and signs, destabilizing identity and causing anxiety in the reader. In light of expatriates, both authors reflect that identity partially comes from structure. Stein suggests that because the expatriate is displaced in their attempts to create something new, their lifestyle is a repeatable routine, an attempt to establish identity and meaning. Highsmith’s view of identity implies the expatriate cannot have a true, singular identity due to the endless adaptations in order to blend in to the culture; in trying to become something else, the expatriate loses his or her originality.

How we structure our own identity has been the subject of much discussion, and for the expatriate there seems to be only two ways to do so, neither of which seem healthy. Stein seems to suggest that the way to constructing identity is through association. Much like Stein's own name is intrinsically linked with modernist painters like Picasso and Matisse, Melanctha also creates her identity through others, repeatedly going from person to person to form a sense of self. This can be specifically seen in her relationships with Jane Hardin and Jeff Campbell. When we first meet Jane Hardin, it is clear that Melanctha idolizes Hardin's wanton ways: "She was very much attracted by Melanctha, and Melanctha was very proud that this Jane would let her know her" (Stein 79). Soon this idolization turns into imitation, and Melanctha and Jane wander the town together, social climbing in their escapades, "Jane and she would talk and walk and laugh and escape from them all very often" (Stein 79). Repeatedly, Stein states that Jane Hardin was woman who was not afraid to understand and that Melanctha grew in her desire to understand. By replacing Jane Hardin's understanding and wisdom with the respectable European aristocracy and a more liberal European society, Melanctha transforms into an expatriate attempting to become a liberated European with a rich genealogy. However, much like an expatriate seldom found satisfaction in one exotic location, roaming from Paris to Italy and beyond, Melanctha also discovers that true identity cannot be achieved through association. "Melanctha tried the drinking and of the other traits, but she did not find that she cared very much to do them," (Stein 79). Her attempt to form identity vicariously is failing, and she moves on, continuing in her wandering.

As vivacious living did not satisfy Melanctha's deep need for her own identity, she endeavors for a quieter life in Jeff Campbell. Quite the opposite of Jane Hardin, Jeff is described as, "He was so good and sympathetic, and he was so earnest and so joyous" (85). When we first meet Jeff, he is always reading and Melanctha soon begins to ask him questions, using her mind in the same way Jeff uses his own. Altering her attitudes to match those around her, Melanctha now thinks and talks, just like Jeff, something she has never before been described doing, "They, mostly their talking to each other still just talked about outside things and what they were thinking" (Stein 95). On the surface this seems quite intimate, yet, Stein makes note that, "Except just in little moments, and not those very often, they never said anything about their feelings" (Stein 95).

It is quite obvious, Melanctha's efforts to assume the identity of those around her will not create a true identity or a purpose, rather, such transitioning leads to the questioning of her realness, "I certainly don't know which is a real Melanctha Herbert...tell me honest, Melanctha, which is the way that is you really, when you are alone, and real and all honest. Tell me Melanctha, for I certainly do want to know it," (Stein 105). In this, Melanctha is a reflection of the disillusioned expatriate trying to adopt the highbrow European culture through various means of adopting different lifestyles. Stein is implying that it is impossible to form a real sense of individuality or self through this multiple culture appropriation.

The other proposed way of establishing an identity is through simply taking it, as Tom Ripley does in Highsmith's novel. Though Tom imitates different agencies, like the IRS, the only identity he truly takes for his own is Dickie Greenleaf's. Having dreamed

of being someone like Dickie Greenleaf his whole life, Tom takes advantage of an opportune moment by murdering Dickie and immediately assuming his identity, plotting before him the steps he would have to take to compete the facsimile, “He would have to tint his hair a little lighter... he had only to look enough like Dickie to be able to use his passport. Well, he did” (Highsmith 98). After completing the murder, the first thing Tom does is to steal the essential representation of Dickie Greenleaf’s identity; “He stopped and yanked at Dickie’s Green ring. He pocketed it. The other ring was tighter, but it came off, over the scuffed knuckles” (Highsmith 102). As an expatriate attempts to rub off the hard working American stain for something greater, Tom’s taking of the rings, Dickie’s signature pieces, effectively positions him as the new Dickie Greenleaf.

Throughout the rest of the novel, Tom takes on all of Dickie’s personality traits and mannerisms, even to the improper use of Italian subjunctives, until he is essentially Dickie Greenleaf. So much, Tom even forgets the sound of his own voice: “It was strangely easy to forget the exact timbre of Tom Ripley’s voice,” (Highsmith 117) and slips when talking to Marge when she asks if he was in Rome the past winter, “Well, not with Tom. I mean, not with Dickie,” (Highsmith 212). Tom’s masquerade is effectual; everyone, including himself, believes him to truly be Dickie. Yet, Highsmith leaves a subtle commentary on expatriatism. Frequently Tom depicts Dickie (as well as himself) a character or part that he slips into. The role-playing game implies you can never be more than what you truly are, a lower class American, no matter how talented you are at pretending. Unless you come to terms with your true sense of self, you will lose it, unable to return to your home country.

Highsmith and Stein unraveling identity and all its components, expounding on how people, but especially the expatriate, attempt to create an identity through form, repetition, association and impersonation. Ripley, the relentless expatriate, is willing to change form and kill all resemblance of his old ways and country in order to become something with more class. Melanctha is the milder expatriate, still willing to experiment with identity, changing form if needed, but relying more heavily on the association with Europe to form her identity. However, Melanctha dies, devoid of true meaning or sense of self and Ripley is a sociopath on the run. In this both Highsmith and Stein imply that using such means to discover yourself and whom you are as a person will ultimately leave you unfulfilled and constantly mistaken for something or someone else.

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JORDYN PERRY

'Electra-fied' Greek Women in Aeschylus's *The Choephoroi*

In the world of psychology, there are two prominent theories about how men view other men and women view other women that came forth from Sigmund Freud's (albeit not widely accepted) work in the field. The first of these two theories is the Oedipus Complex—the idea that in each male child there is “a desire for sexual involvement with the parent of the opposite sex and a concomitant sense of rivalry with the parent of the same sex” (Oedipus Complex). The second of these two theories, and the one that we will be focusing on, is the theory that Carl Jung coined the Electra Complex or, in other words, the Oedipus complex applied to women (Electra Complex and Freud: Definition, Story & Examples). What the Electra Complex states is that women, as children, form a strong attachment to their fathers, which in turn makes them see their mothers as competition, and dislike the older women for it (Electra Complex and Freud). These theories put forth the premises that, later in life, men inherently dislike other men and women inherently dislike other women, and since it is true that the character Electra, for which the Electra complex is named, was produced by the ancient Greeks, it must be true that the women of that area and time period (on which we will focus) displayed, or unconsciously believed in, that sort of relationship between the sexes. Whether the theories are true for people of other cultures and time periods is irrelevant. The claim of this paper is, and is only, that the women belonging to the culture in which the character of Electra was produced were under the influence, knowingly or otherwise, of the Electra complex.

In order to examine the validity of this paper's argument, let us first focus our attention on Electra's story to affirm Jung's labeling of the woman's version of the

Oedipus complex. The character of Electra is viewed in *The Choephoroi* by Aeschylus, which is the second of a trilogy of plays falling under the title of *The Oresteia*. The play is about the exiled prince, Orestes, and the princess Electra. Their father, Agamemnon, the rightful king and ruler over their kingdom, has been unjustly slain, and both siblings are at his gravesite (separately) in order to pay their respects and seek safety and solace. Orestes arrives first, placing locks of his hair upon his father's grave to pay the deceased man respect, and hides from sight as his sister arrives with a group of libation bearers (members of the chorus) to pay her own respects. Eventually she sees some of the hair belonging to her brother and, recognizing it as hair that looks like her own, it leads to Orestes jumping out and revealing himself to her. The siblings talk, and Orestes convinces Electra that it is indeed he, and then the real plot commences. The pair decides that, as was common in the revenge-based culture in this time period, the only way to truly get justice for their father is to kill the person responsible for his death. This belief in the necessity of revenge can be viewed clearly from lines 493-499, where the chorus states that:

It's the law—once drops of blood
are shed upon the ground
they cry out for still more blood.
Slaughter calls upon the Furies
of those who have been killed.
Thus, hard on murder's heels
destruction comes again (*The Choephoroi*)

However, the conundrum then arises that it is their mother, Clytemnestra, who led to their father's untimely demise. It is not seen as just in Orestes and Electra's society to kill family members (blood ties are highly important), but Apollo, through an oracle, dictates that Orestes must do it or he will suffer much worse than if he doesn't (*The Choephoroi* 333-363). Electra, who could have been against the idea or at the very least not been a part of it, took an active role in the eventual demise of her mother—displaying an explicit loathing and disdain for the woman which can be seen plainly in her statement from lines 514-520:

To what can we appeal? What else
 but to the agonies we suffer,
 anguish from the one who bore us,
 our mother. So let her grovel.
 She'll not appease our pain.
 We're bred from her, like wolves,
 whose savage hearts do not relent" (*The Choephoroi*).

Electra advocates for Orestes to do the will of Apollo and kill the woman, despite the fact that Clytemnestra is her mother. She then, as the siblings attempt to rally Agamemnon to their side from his grave, says that his tomb she will “honour above all other shrines” (*The Choephoroi* 613-614). This statement by Electra points to an almost obsessive (perhaps incestuously-desired on the part of Electra) relationship between the daughter and father, and her previously stated disgust with and dislike for her mother clearly display the Electra Complex at work as well. The siblings then finish attempting to speak

to the dead Agamemnon, trying to win his favor through stating all of the wrongs that were done to him and all of the things they will, in turn, do to honor him. They hear about a dream Clytemnestra had which makes Orestes believe he will succeed, and then they turn to planning. Orestes hashes out a plan in which Electra will “go inside” and “work on this together” with him. She does not argue with the plan. This is the point at which the individual plot points in *The Choephoroi* the most relevant to the Electra Complex end, but it is important to note that the murder of their mother was carried out as planned.

As it is plain to see, the story of Electra is clearly indicative of the complex named after her. She hated her mother, loved her father, and followed behind Orestes (a male) in order to act against the mother she hated (a female) to avenge her beloved father. Hints of the Electra Complex are visible in other, more recent and popular stories such as Snow White and Cinderella (Electra Complex and Freud). However, in the popular stories, the antagonizing lead female villain is normally not the mother, but a faux mother. The villain is almost always a stepmother or other female guardian, and is normally jealous of the younger girl's beauty or power or, as the two are often linked, both. It could be argued that because the stories have such popular appeal, that it is, in fact, the mother that is being represented by the evil step mother characters, but since it would be against the popular happy family model our society likes to cling to, it would be taboo for the villain to actually be the mother in pop fairy tales and movies (Electra Complex and Freud).

Unlike the people in society today, ancient Greeks, although very blood-oriented, had no such qualms in the placing of the mother in the viciously villainous role, and that

is why it may be true that the Electra Complex was much more widely present and acknowledged, or at least understood, during that time period. After all, the audience obviously did not have enough of a problem with the evil mother figure murdering the father and subsequently hurting her children to ban the play from reproduction and destroy the evidence of its existence. If they had, the trend of stories such as Cinderella and Snow White might be seen as the beginning points of something that might eventually become the Electra Complex. As it is, though, those two stories, and the others like them, just serve as proof that parts of the Electra Complex (acknowledged or otherwise) continue to be relevant in today's society. After all, if new versions, albeit watered down versions, of the Electra Complex are still popular enough and relevant enough to be watched by today's American youth in a society that doesn't necessarily believe in the validity of the Electra Complex, imagine how much more applicable and open the Electra Complex may have been in the female population of the ancient Greeks.

Although it may occasionally seem like it, ideas don't just spring out of thin air. Freud was a chauvinistic man who believed that all women suffered from penis envy and secretly desired to be men, but just because he was sexist (not surprising during his time period), that doesn't necessarily mean that everything he said has to be incorrect. Even though Freud's work is frowned upon by most of the psychology field today, the man did make certain key insights into the varied ways that our minds work. And the Electra complex is one of those insights that, if looked at closely enough, is one of those rare, not-so-crazy gems. The premise that the daughter hates the mother because the daughter desired to be a man is probably incorrect, but the theory of competition for the father's

affection between the mother and the daughter (and the unconscious dislike of the mother by the daughter that grows because of this competition) is not only possible, but probable. The behavior of Electra in *The Choephoroi* shows that whether or not the Electra complex is the norm in ancient Greek society, it did exist to some extent. Electra was willing to help in the murder of her mother, despite both the inherent taboos against such an act against family, and the idea that the gods may very well punish her for such a decision. Her love of her father and hatred of her mother, the Electra Complex in a nutshell, caused her to act completely and totally illogically, yet it was still seen as a valid and realistic enough response that the play was kept and has survived to this day. Since hints of the Electra Complex still linger in popular culture today, it is safe to say that my assertion that the Electra Complex was prevalent in at least some of the women of ancient Greece stands.

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ELLIOTT PORTER

Ebony Phonics: The Origins, Controversies, and Persistence of Ebonics in American Public Schools

The United States of America has an undeniably diverse population. With these different populations being so close in proximity, one would think that the American people would sound similar, however, this is not the case. Each region of the United States has its own dialect or variety of English. These varieties can be broken down even further into the African-American variety of English known as Ebonics. It has also been described as “African-American Vernacular English (AAVE), African Language Systems, Pan African Communication Behaviors, Black Dialect, Noble Language of the Ghetto” (Croghan 74). The origins of this variety can be traced all the way back to the days of slave trade. Today, there are arguments that Ebonics does not belong with the other dialects in America especially in the classroom.

Missouri psychologist Robert L. Williams coined the phrase “Ebonics” in 1973, which is a combination of the words “ebony” and “phonics” (Fields). The true origins of Ebonics began much earlier. Analyzing English Grammar, written by Thomas P. Klammer, Muriel R. Schulz, and Angela Della Volpe, states “The language of West African slaves, who, according to current research, spoke a version of English (sometimes called Plantation Creole) that had evolved from pidgin English (a simplified version of English) used to conduct African trade including the slave trade. In contact with English spoken by whites, Plantation Creole gradually evolved into the dialect today called Ebonics” (Klammer 22). “Blackshire-Belay explains that the evolution of Ebonics, as a form of communication, commenced the moment the first slave ship left Africa” (Fields). Without the slave trade, there would be no such thing as Ebonics.

Blackshire-Belay and other language experts agree “that the speech of African Americans differs from what is commonly referred to as ‘Standard American English’ because its speakers have retained grammatical and other linguistic elements from their West African mother tongues” (Fields). Specifically Ibo, Yoruba, Ewe, Wolof, Fante, and Mandinka are all West African languages that Ebonics can be linked to. Blackshire-Belay goes as far as exclaiming, "Ebonics falls into the African form of languages. It is not a dialect of English, even though it uses English words” (Fields).

Robert L. Williams and a few of his colleagues found that “children brought certain linguistic patterns and codes with them to the school, but that the codes that they were accustomed to were not being used in the school” (Fields). He goes on to say "There was a discontinuity between the child's code and the school's code, and the child's code was being denigrated” (Fields). Williams and his colleagues came up with an experiment in which they gave two of the same standardized test to a group of kindergartners. The only difference was that one test was in American English and the other was in Ebonics. He explains, "For example, when we [showed them a picture and] asked them to point to a squirrel that was beginning to climb a tree, some of them got it, but many of them did not because they didn't understand the word 'beginning” (Fields). He then changed the word “beginning” to two phrases commonly used in Ebonics “starting to” and “fixing to.” Once the change was made, the students understood the meaning of the sentence. "The study showed that the students that did bad on the Standard English test did well on the Ebonics version of the test. “According to Williams, Ebonics has both a grammatical and lexicological base. ‘For example, if I say, 'The hawk is not jiving in St. Louis,' there is

nothing grammatically incorrect [as far as standard English is concerned] about that sentence. But I'm using an Ebonics term." The translation of Williams's example is, "In St. Louis, the wind is very cold.' For Williams, Black slang is part of Ebonics. The other part of Ebonics involves grammar, sentence structure and tonal omissions. For instance, failing to conjugate verbs such as 'to be' and leaving the final consonant off words are 'classically' Ebonic. An example being, 'The hawk don't be jivin' in St. Louis'" (Fields).

Samuel A. Perez, the author of "Using Ebonics Or Black English As A Bridge To Teaching Standard English" gives more examples of how Ebonics works. "Ebonics has its own unique phonological features. For example, the r, l, and t sounds may be omitted from medial and/or final positions: 'guard' and 'car' become 'god' and 'cah,' 'tall' and 'help' become 'taw' and 'hep,' and 'past' and 'desk' become 'pass' and 'des...'(Perez)"

Perez goes on to explain that some sounds that may be interchanged or pronounced the same "this,' 'them,' and 'those' become 'dis,' 'dem,' and 'doz' "(Perez). Perez also explains that "Ebonics also has its own unique syntactic features. Some of the more important syntactic features of Black English follow. Certain transformations may occur in verb forms: 'she walks' becomes 'she walk,' 'she is good' becomes 'she good,' 'she be good...'" (Perez). He continues by giving the example that "Other transformations may occur in sentence structure: 'we have' becomes 'us got, 'we don't have any' becomes 'we don't got none...'" (Perez).

There are people in this world that believe Ebonics has no place in the classroom and African Americans who use this dialect should only use Standard American English.

Orlando L. Taylor, Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at predominantly

African American Howard University, is one of these people. He has been quoted saying, "It is criminal to graduate African American students who cannot speak and write Standard English. If we do, we are setting them up for failure. We, in higher education, must find a way to effectively teach Black children and then, we must prepare a teaching force to do it" (Fields). Leon W. Todd, Jr., the author of "Ebonics is defective speech and a handicap for black children," states in his paper "Standard English determines one's career success and failure. Let us face it; Ebonics is a fancy political cover for abnormal, defective, or dysfunctional speech. Students and their families who use these unfortunate speech patterns often are in need of a speech therapist to help treat their group reinforced speech pathology if they are to function effectively in the usual mainstream society" (Todd). As Todd continues, he explains that trying to incorporate Ebonics into the classroom is detrimental to the learning process and students need to realize that ". . . their poor language habits reamed on the streets, will not serve them very well in later life" (Todd). Todd makes the case that school systems are based on their use of American Standard English. He claims, "Public schools are failing today largely because they have lost respect for Standard English, and instead post respect and approval for street language in the name of culture or diversity" (Todd). Todd uses the word Ebonics as if it were an affliction by stating, "Some argue that these children with Ebonics, who are victims of a poverty class or dysfunctional family language environment, are appropriately thought to have language disorders and often with learning disabilities" (Todd). He continually refers to Ebonics as a learning disorder or disability. "The problem still needs to be diagnosed as a major language disorder and/or a learning

disability so the child can receive the help needed to correct the situation. Ebonics needs to be recognized early in the school experience as a language disorder, and the child needs to receive help early in the school experience to overcome the disability” (Todd). Some people believe in respecting and tolerating individuals who use a different variety of English. These same people strive to find new ways to help these children learn and be successful later on in life. Todd sees these efforts as pity. “Actually, the truth is that not immediately correcting the child's substandard English is always disrespecting the child all the more. Whether it is a hillbilly child, an African American child, or other, respect for the child has little to do with tolerating or not tolerating incorrect English” (Todd).

There are individuals that do believe that Standard American English and Ebonics can coexist. Perez is one of those people. “After teachers become familiar with the features of Ebonics, they are then prepared to design and implement instructional practices. The approach suggested in this article is based on the concept of bi-dialecticism, in which students retain their home or community dialect while learning and using the Standard English dialect of the school and larger society” (Perez). He suggests taking the same approach that you would if you were to teach a foreign language. In doing so, you compare and contrast Ebonics and Standard American English so that the students can see the differences between the two varieties. This technique is based on procedures described by mathematician Mitchell Feigenbaum (the Feigenbaum Constant) in 1970. Perez starts by stating, “Teachers should begin by using their knowledge of Black English to carefully assess the phonological and syntactic features of students' speech and language for the purpose of identifying targets for contrastive analysis”

(Perez). He also bring to light that “Dialects should be discussed with students, and teachers should be sure to make the point that variant dialects of English are different, not deficient” (Perez). Perez explains that discussions should focus on “. . . the appropriateness of specific language or dialect in certain situations, and on the distinction between ‘school’ language and ‘home/community’ language” (Perez). He stresses the point that educators always show appreciation and respect for not only Ebonics, but also all languages and goes on to describe another effective teaching technique called the “word discrimination drill” in which one uses American Standard English and Ebonics. “In this drill the teacher presents stimulus patterns that are a combinations of Standard English and Black English, and students must indicate their ability to differentiate them by saying "same" or "different (Perez)." Perez goes on to give examples such as “when the teacher presents "help (SE)-hep (BE)," students respond with "same" or "different." In the sentence discrimination drill, the teacher presents patterns that are similar to those in the word drill except that key words are placed in sentences (For example: "I hep my sister" (BE) and "I help my sister "(SE), and students respond with "same" or "different." (Perez). There is another drill or activity described in Perez’s paper called the home-school drill. The students are responsible for identifying whether certain words or phrases represent home (Ebonics) or school (American Standard English). They are also required to translate Ebonics into American Standard English and vise versa in an exercise called transition drills.

There are always two sides to every debate. In the case of this variety of English, there are those who find it to be detrimental to the education of Black youth. There are

also those who accept that just because a student does not speak using American Standard English it does not mean that said student has to be uneducated or change who they are. Through all of the heated debates, one thing is certain, “Black English as a separate dialect of English spoken by eighty percent of African Americans, which differs from other varieties of American English” (Perez) and it is here to stay.

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REBEKAH SANDERS

**Breakin' Common Ground: Dialectal Identity and Code Switching
Among Stigmatized Dialect Speakers in the Academy**

Do I contradict myself?
Very well then I contradict myself,
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)
~ Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself"

Introduction

The United States has historically been affectionately labeled “the great melting pot,” but how accurate is this description? The regions of the US and its inhabitants are about as diverse as one could imagine in one country. Though there may arguably be some sort of “Americanness” that binds us together, it is undeniable that the nation is characterized by a great deal of multiplicity—racially, ethnically, socially, politically, geographically, and dialectally. While the linguistic landscape of America is varied in its regional dialects, not all varieties of English receive the same treatment. One of the most stigmatized dialects in the US is Appalachian English (AE), on which this essay will focus; another is African American Vernacular English (AAVE), which will be discussed later in this essay.

Michael Montgomery, a leading scholar of AE, describes the Appalachian dialect as often ridiculed and misunderstood, saying, “[T]oo rarely has it been appreciated for what it is: the native speech of millions of Americans that has a distinctive history and that makes Appalachia what it is just as sure as the region's music does” (“Appalachian English”). As Rebecca S. Wheeler and Rachel Swords explain, the prejudicial judgments toward certain dialects, including AE, “are not based on linguistic grounds, but on sociopolitical considerations” (473). The Appalachian dialect has long been associated

with labels like “redneck,” “hillbilly,” and “hick,” and not with titles like “scholar” or “intellectual.” These stereotypes can be traced back to negative cultural, class, and educational associations tied to the Appalachian region. While many in academia may hold more progressive views of AE as well as other stigmatized dialects, the deep-seated insecurities produced by the stigmatization of AE in society at large follow students into the academy and may color their perceptions of their identity as scholars.

The issue of dialect is worth our attention since language is a vital aspect of both heritage and individuality. Montgomery aptly asserts that, “language is inseparable from human experience and interaction” (147). Similarly, Alice Chik, in her contributing chapter in *Language and Culture: Reflective Narratives and the Emergence of Identity*, says that her “personal identity is tied intimately with [her] languages and cultures” (58). Chik, who grew up in Hong Kong with parents from Shanghai and who now teaches in the United States, fittingly uses the plural form when referring to the languages and cultures that have shaped her. Though it may seem more natural for a multilingual person to refer to the *languages* he or she speaks, even monolingual persons (especially those in academia) are involved in various discourse communities that each possesses a dialect of their own. Discourse communities can be connected to regional dialect, but can also be associated with other bodies, such as academic disciplines or vocations.

The practice of switching between dialects depending on the setting is known as code switching. This practice is discussed in much of the scholarship on stigmatized dialects, but the attitudes taken by linguists and educators regarding code switching widely vary. While some scholars advocate encouraging students to code switch from

early on in their schooling, other scholars see code switching as an oppressive practice, which contributes to a crisis in identity. It is important to recognize and appreciate the challenges experienced by college students who speak stigmatized dialects (such as Appalachian English), but these challenges do not devalue the practice of code switching; code switching is a positive practice since it is consistent with the goal of effectively communicating in various discourse communities.

“Scholars Don’t Have Southern Accents”: Stereotypes and Their Effects

The Internet is populated with videos, pictures, and so-called memes, which can provide an insightful window into American culture, both the aspects which are rapidly evolving and those which are remaining largely the same. One meme, which has been widely circulated in social networking circles, provides insight into our society by offering up an unfortunate example of casual dialect prejudice. The meme reads, “When you say ‘I seen,’ I assume you won’t finish that sentence with ‘the inside of a book.’ I see. I saw. I have seen.” The meme equates a deviation from Standard Written English (SWE), which is commonly found in AE, with evidence of a person’s lack of education. Because using the past perfect form of the verb “see” (omitting the helping verb) is a common feature of the Appalachian dialect, this nonconformity with SWE does not necessarily indicate that a person is illiterate or uneducated, but rather that he or she is likely from the Appalachian region.

In discussing the stereotypes that surround AE and the challenges those stereotypes can create for college students, it is important to note that the Appalachian region and the people who populate its 205,000 square miles cannot and should not be

lumped into one consistent unit, since, as Todd Snyder points out, “Appalachia is not a monolithic entity” (201). Likewise, Appalachian English, while it has some characterizing features, which are largely adhered to throughout the region, is not a monolithic entity either. As Montgomery notes, “No region, community, or person is uniform in speech. Variation in language takes place along spatial, temporal, social, ethnic, individual, and other dimensions” (157). Dialects give no heed to geographical borders.

Taking this into account, when I refer to AE speakers or Appalachian dialect speakers, these terms are used out of necessity to label a varied group whose members share some similar manners of speech, but should not be taken to refer to people within a well-defined region or demographic. Similarly, references to AAVE are used loosely with understanding given to the fact that this group of speakers, like AE speakers, is not homogenous. Dialects, such as AE or AAVE, can be broken down further into various subdialects, but making distinctions among these nuances of language is not necessary for the purpose of this essay.

Speaking generally, students whose primary discourse communities speak AE tend to grow up aware of the fact that their native tongue is seen as less than academic. As Snyder says of his own upbringing in rural West Virginia in *The Rhetoric of Appalachian Identity*, “We did [...] realize that we were Appalachian and we understood that being Appalachian fostered a certain amount of shame. We knew that city folk thought we were Stupid-Barefoot-Hillbillies and we understood that some things in life were not meant for Appalachian kids like us, college being one of those things” (8).

Despite Snyder's feelings that college was not for him, he went on to attain a college education and is now an assistant professor of rhetoric, writing, and oral communication at Sienna College in New York. His book, published last year, blends personal narrative and critical commentary to provide unique insight into the experiences and place of rural Appalachians in the academy. Snyder does not discuss the issue of dialect explicitly, but the vital connection between dialect and identity weaves its way through his book in more subtle ways. An example of the AE he grew up with can be found in the way he consistently uses *holme* in place of home.

Snyder not only focuses on his own experiences but includes the experiences of a group of Appalachian students from various colleges in Appalachian regions of Ohio, West Virginia, and Kentucky that he interviewed. He especially focuses on the challenges faced by first-generation college students, which are not quite the same as the issues commonly faced by Appalachian students from families with higher levels of education. According to Snyder, "[W]e as a field are beginning to realize that Appalachian college students face a unique set of obstacles when they try to become the first in their families to obtain a college degree" (118). In particular, first-generation college students may struggle even more than their peers with college-educated parents when it comes to the way they speak at home, though this issue is not limited to first-generation students. The issue of sounding uppity or "above their raisin's" at home is a concern Katherine Sohn, who has focused on the experiences of Appalachian college women in her scholarship, says her students share (129). This is a concern reflected over and over again in personal narratives of Appalachians who speak of their struggle with

fitting in at college and at home. The acquisition of a different manner of speaking in addition to the transformative experiences of college may leave some students feeling somewhat alienated from home or caught between two worlds. Snyder reflects that he sometimes feels “as if [he has] lived two very different lives—life before college and life after college” (8).

Of course, first-generation college students are not the only AE speaking students to struggle with their identity as academics. Snyder confirms that, whether “from educated families or not, Appalachian college students experience academia differently than do many of their peers” (118-119). In an interview conducted as part of a study on “Dialect and Influences on the Academic Experiences of College Students” by Stephanie Dunstan and Audrey Jaeger, Sara, an undergraduate student from rural Appalachia, said in an interview, “I feel like [the campus environment] is scholarly and scholars don’t have Southern accents. There’s not hardly anyone in the anthropology department that actually has a Southern accent, which is kind of weird . . . I think that goes back to having a Southern accent people tend to think that you are less smart” (Dunstan and Jaeger 793). The researchers conducted a mixed methods study in an effort to “examine the influence of speaking a stigmatized dialect on academic experiences for White and African American students (both male and female) from rural Southern Appalachia attending [North Carolina State University] a large research institution in the urban South” (Dunstan and Jaeger 777). Twenty-six students participated. The findings of the study, which were published just three months ago, “suggest that for more vernacular students, dialect can influence participation in class, degree of comfort in course [*sic*], perceived

academic challenges, and for some, their beliefs about whether or not others perceive them as intelligent or scholarly based on their speech” (777).

Snyder, in discussing his own experiences as an Appalachian college student, laments that, “[w]hile an abundance of research has been conducted on educational issues regarding race, gender, and class, an obvious research gap exists regarding the educational experiences of Appalachian college students” (118). Dunstan and Jaeger have taken a noteworthy step in closing that gap in scholarship, which they also recognized as an issue. They agree that there has been a deficiency in “studies specifically addressing the role of dialect in Appalachian students’ college experiences or of other speakers of stigmatized varieties of English” (Dunstan and Jaeger 781).

The students interviewed in the study reveal their awareness of the stigmatization of and common stereotypes associated with Appalachian dialects. Another student in the study, named Hank, made light of the erroneous preconceptions people often hold about him because of his dialect.

They build up these notions, and you can tell on their face when you say something that it just throws them off completely. And I love that look on their face. [Laughing] They’re just shocked! Like one of my hobbies, I like, I love following the stock market. I trade options. I really enjoy astronomy, too. And people, when you tell them that, they just, they’re not ready for it and they just look at you like, “What!? That makes no sense! [both laugh] You’re supposed to be a farmer!” (Dunstan and Jaeger 795)

Hank, like other students who speak an AE dialect, is well aware of the fact that his speech may cause people to reduce his talents and interests to stereotypical Appalachian pursuits. This is not to say farming should not be associated with Appalachian culture. Agriculture is an important industry in rural Appalachia, which is undoubtedly where this stereotype is derived.

Some stereotypes associated with AE are more harmful than the assumption that one is involved in farming. Perceptions of Appalachian culture (to which AE is inextricably tied) are steeped in images of backwardness and illiteracy. But how and why have these stereotypes emerged? When attempting to answer this question, there are many different factors, which must be considered. David Hsiung notes in his chapter on stereotypes in *High Mountains Rising: Appalachia in Time and Place*, that “the issue of stereotypes and Appalachia is so complex that one should expect that it would take many different approaches to understand the subject” (106). There is no simple answer, and discussing the complexities of how these stereotypes have emerged is not the primary purpose of this essay. However, for the sake of context, I will discuss in brief a few of the important factors, which have contributed to the stigmatization of Appalachian English.

Part of the answer can be found in portrayals of Appalachians in popular culture. Originally, the public’s perception of Appalachia was primarily shaped by the depiction of the region and its dialect in literature (Ellis). Today, everything from redneck jokes to TV shows and movies perpetuates the stereotypes. Sociologists Kathleen Blee and Dwight Billings claim that the depictions of Appalachians in the media “work by

universalizing common stereotypes of hillbillies and implying that these images represent all that is essential about Appalachian peoples—black and white, straight and gay, rural and urban, rich and poor,” and thereby reduce “a complex regional society that is peopled by diverse groups to a set of simplistic caricatures” (qtd. in Hsiung 102). Famous TV shows, such as *The Beverly Hillbillies*, and movies, such as *Deliverance*, include hyperbolic embodiments of the stereotypical Appalachian dweller, which reinforce our culture’s perception of the Appalachian as an “other” figure. This sense of otherness Appalachia and its dialects have been assigned is largely connected to negative class associations. Appalachia has long since been viewed as an economically poor region, and though the overall economic condition and industrial diversity of the region has improved, it is still known for being a less than prosperous area of the country.

Education is, of course, deeply tied to class. Therefore, it is not surprising that negative associations with Appalachia’s educational affluence also contribute to the stigmatization of AE. Sara’s observation that “Scholars don’t have Southern accents” is in keeping with the conception that those who speak with an Appalachian dialect must not be well-educated. Regardless of student’s levels of intelligence or education, speaking in their vernacular dialect can cause people to make inaccurate judgments about their intellect or academic capabilities. This is a particularly dangerous association for AE speakers in academia because it can potentially contribute to a sense of scholarly inferiority. As Dunstan and Jaeger explain,

Negative stereotypes about a student’s language could be detrimental not only to his or her self-esteem but also to academic identity and self-

efficacy beliefs. If a student sees himself not as a 'good student' but as someone whose accent has reduced him to a 'hick' or 'hillbilly,' the development of a positive academic (and social) identity could be stymied. (781-782)

The challenges for AE speakers in the academy because of their dialects cannot be outlined definitely, because they vary from student to student. However, it can be accurately said that students who speak stigmatized varieties of English, such as AE, face some unique challenges in identifying as scholars because of the stereotypes associated with their manners of speech. There is a large discrepancy between AE and the SWE of academia, and these students are sometimes at a disadvantage in being taken seriously as scholars because of their dialects. In some cases where faculty and peers are more accepting of AE, AE speakers can still suffer from a self-induced sense of inferiority due to internalizing the stereotypes associated with their dialect and culture. Additionally, for first-generation students especially, reengaging with the primary discourse community of home can become complicated after students have been immersed in the secondary discourse community of academia. Students should not sacrifice their ability to engage with their home discourse communities for the sake of coming into their own as scholars. Rather, code switching can be used as a tool to effectively communicate in the full scope of discourse communities of which students are a part.

Code Switching as a Positive Practice

"I learned the skill of shifting between informal and formal dialects fairly early in my academic career because I was an avid reader," reflects Amy Clark in her essay,

“Voices in the Appalachian College Classroom” (111). “Intuitively, I knew that altering my dialect was as necessary among my peers for the purposes of solidarity as it was with my teachers for the purpose of making A’s” (Clark 111). Clark’s desire to tailor her written and spoken dialect in order to fit the setting in which she was communicating provides an example of the uses of code switching in everyday life. Later in her essay, Clark discusses a study done by the Appalachian Writing Project (AWP), which revealed the benefits of using contrastive analysis to help students learn to code switch more effectively.

Last month, BBC News published a story, which discussed a debate among primatologists over the implications of a study published earlier this year. In the study, it was observed that a group of chimpanzees that were moved from a Dutch safari park to the Edinburgh Zoo adjusted their vocalizations to match those made by the existing chimpanzee colony at the Edinburgh Zoo (Webb). “After three years in their new home, the Dutch group had shifted from calling for apples with a high-pitched, excited grunt, to a low-pitched one that more closely matched the rather unenthusiastic ‘apples’ call used by the Edinburgh chimps” (Webb). While there is disagreement within the scientific community over this study, from the perspective of sociolinguistics, this study could hold important implications, since it appears to provide an example of code switching in the natural world. It seems reasonable to assert, based on the findings, that the new chimpanzees were adjusting their call to the existing group’s in order to fit in with their new community.

The chimpanzees were not the first to draw attention to code switching in the news. In 2008, President Elect Barack Obama made a ripple in the media over three words he said to a black cashier in a Washington, D.C. diner. After being asked if he wanted his change, Obama responded, “Nah, we straight.” This episode was recorded and posted on YouTube with the title “Barack Obama Real Cool.” The response to Obama’s use of AAVE in this and other situations has varied. While some may see it as a testament to his unbroken connection with his racial/cultural heritage, others may see it as a symptom of disingenuousness. After all, altering one’s style of communication depending on the setting might seem somewhat two-faced.

The title of a 2010 NPR radio broadcast discussing Obama’s dialects and Harry Reid’s comments on Obama’s ability to code switch is telling of many people’s initial reactions to the phenomenon. Though this is not necessarily the conclusion the host and interviewees reached in the broadcast, the title, “Code Switching: Are We All Guilty?” suggests that code switching is something of which to be guilty. People who think of code switching as an unethical practice likely feel this way because of the previously discussed connection between language and identity. However, as I alluded to, our linguistic identities are not one-dimensional. Those who oppose code switching undoubtedly take part in it on a daily basis, though probably on the subconscious level.

In 2013, NPR launched a “new team covering race, ethnicity and culture” and called it Code Switch. The team’s first article, “How Code-Switching Explains the World,” discusses the prevalence of code switching in society, referencing again that simple, but significant phrase used by Obama as well as other popular figures in

American culture, including Beyoncé. They also point out that “Comedy Central's sketch comedy duo Keegan-Michael Key and Jordan Peele have frequently referenced code-switching in their humor,” suggesting that the idea of adjusting one’s speech is not simply a subject of interest to linguists, but something to which anyone can relate (Chow, et al.).

Code switching is so prevalent because people are involved in various discourse communities which all call for their own styles of communication. In order to understand why code switching is a healthy practice, we must first understand and validate the reality of these discourse communities. James Paul Gee gives a helpful explanation of what defines a discourse community in his essay, “What Is Literacy?” In view of the definitions of “discourse” and “community” independently from each other, it makes sense to think of a discourse community as a group with a certain way of communicating. But, as Gee points out, a discourse community encompasses far more than this; it denotes “a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or a social network” (18). Gee goes on to say, “Think of discourse as an identity kit which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act and talk so as to take on a particular role that others will recognize” (Gee 18).

The comparison between a discourse and a costume is an interesting one. Consider the decisions people make when they dress before going out. Though there is wiggle room for a person to express his or her personal style, most people tend to be guided by the social conventions, which govern fashion. If I wore an evening gown to a

baseball stadium, I would make those around me uncomfortable and probably confused. The same result would occur if I wore a tee shirt and shorts to a formal event. In either case, my choice of attire would be distracting because it did not fit the occasion.

Though, as with all metaphors, this one has its limitations, we can think about language in a similar way. Robert C. Pooley, in *The Teaching of English Usage*, defines successful language usage as “language choices so that the fewest number of persons will be distracted by the choices” (qtd. in Reaser 106). According to this definition, one has communicated successfully if the content of one’s message is what has ultimately come through, and not the manner in which it was said. Though words or phrases are sometimes chosen to shock or grab a reader or listener, on the whole, our language choices should be made on the basis of what will allow the message to emerge clearly. Because different groups will find different choices distracting, it is fitting to adapt one’s dialect in order to communicate more effectively in a given situation.

Scholars who view code switching negatively, however, would likely point out that it is unfair for a student who speaks a stigmatized dialect to adapt her or his communication (written or oral) to fit the dialect of White privilege, what we’ve deemed “Standard” Written English. It is true that language is connected to power, and the language of academia more closely reflects the dominant group in American society than minority groups. However, to discount the value of code switching because of the concern that it is discriminatory is overly simplistic. For one, this argument finds its basis in the fact that SWE is the English of the privileged group, and as I mentioned, this is true to an extent in that there is a smaller discrepancy between more mainstream

varieties of English and SWE than there is between stigmatized dialects and SWE. But that does not mean middle or upper class Whites do not experience the need to code switch.

Peter Elbow makes the important point that “Standard Written English is no one’s mother tongue” in his essay, “Inviting the Mother Tongue: Beyond ‘Mistakes,’ ‘Bad English,’ and ‘Wrong Language’” (362). Wheeler and Swords, after establishing the definition of a dialect as a language variety “associated with a particular regional or social group,” conclude that, “[s]ince everyone is associated with a particular regional or social group, everyone speaks a dialect” (473). I would take Wheeler and Swords’s statement a step further by saying that everyone speaks not just “a dialect,” but *dialects*. If the SWE used in academic communication (especially academic writing) is just one of many dialects and is no one’s native dialect, then all of us code switch to some degree when communicating in the academic sphere, as well as in other spheres. This also contributes to the view that linguistic conventions provide a sort of common ground for communication rather than simply a platform for prejudice.

In academia, not only does SWE provide the common ground for communicating in a somewhat unified manner across the board, but various fields of study possess their own discourses as well. Part of becoming integrated into a certain discipline is learning the jargon and style of communication that characterizes the discipline. These variances in style can be seen partially in the different style handbooks disciplines adhere to in their writings. While MLA style, for instance, is conducive to the study of English, Science requires a style like CSE to meet its communicative needs. Though the academy is the

focus of this essay, it is worth noting that academics are, of course, not the only ones who are involved in various discourse communities. Every imaginable group, from vocations, to religious sects, to hobbies has their own discourses. A person may find himself code switching to effectively communicate with a potential employer, an older relative, a child, etc.

Critics of code switching too often reduce the practice to a means of appeasing the dominant group without giving heed to the need for altering one's communication to fit the situation. Vershawn Ashanti Young, one of the most outspoken critics of code switching, asserts that code switching is, in fact, "all about race" (51). Young focuses on the use of code switching among AAVE speakers in his writings, which is in keeping with the conversation on code switching as a whole. Despite the fact that AE (a dialect primarily associated with Caucasian speakers) is viewed and treated similarly to AAVE, it is completely overshadowed by AAVE in the conversations on code switching. This is reflective of an even larger trend; as Godley, Sweetland, Wheeler, and Minnici point out, "AAVE is the most extensively researched dialect of American English in linguistic and educational scholarship" (30). Because of the focus on AAVE, AE—despite its being one of the most stigmatized American English dialects along with AAVE—may be overlooked by scholars like Young when he discusses the ways in which code switching is inseparable from racist ideology.

Code switching is not limited to switching one's native dialect out for the privileged dialect; it is far more than that. Young says of contrastive analysis, an

instructional method used in some schools in which the grammatical patterns of the native dialect are taught alongside SWE in order to help students learn to code switch,

On the surface this instructional method sounds fair because it appears to allow black students to have their racial identity and speak it too. Yet in truth, to teach students that the two language varieties cannot mix and must remain apart belies the claim of linguistic equality and replicates the same phony logic behind Jim Crow legislation. (53)

The practice of contrastive analysis has been shown to be most effective with younger students whose language acquisition capacity is heightened, but for all school ages studied, students' abilities to perform on standardized English tests increased when they learned about their native dialects along with the dialect of SWE. Though this practice may cause us to think of code switching as dualistic, it is more complex than that. Some scholars, such as Keith Guilyard or Deborah Mutnick use the term "bidialectal" or "bidialectalism" when talking about the concept of students being able to take part in two cultures (the culture of origin and the added culture). While this concept may be more manageable to understand, we would likely be more accurate in using terms like "multidialectal," since it is never so cut and dry as a person switching between two distinct dialects. In this way, Young and others set up a false dichotomy when they refer only to AAVE or another dialect pitted against SWE. These represent only two language varieties when, in fact, people are involved in far more discourse communities whose manners of communication could be considered dialects of their own.

In his essay, “Nah, We Straight: An Argument Against Code Switching,” Young continues to use dyadic terms such as “double consciousness” to describe a psychological crisis in linguistic identity African Americans experience as a result of their “American and black selves” (52). According to Young, this double consciousness or “racial schizophrenia” “stems from the legacy of racism” and is perpetuated by code switching. Young engages with the claims made by Wheeler and Swords and others about the benefits of code switching and contrastive analysis, acknowledging that their approach is not consciously meant to foster racism, but that it is based in racist ideology nonetheless, since it standardizes the dialect of White privilege. Again, this is a reductionist view and does not reflect the fact that code switching is a valuable tool to all people and not just AAVE speakers or even speakers of stigmatized dialects.

Young does, however, make some thought-provoking points. In advocating “code meshing, the blending and concurrent use of American English dialects” no matter the situation, he claims that code switching is purely ideological, and it is really code meshing which inevitably takes place in practice (51, 59). It is true that the word “switching” may seem to suggest a system that is more cut and dry than it is. In reality, people tend to carry over parts of their primary discourses with them even when adjusting their dialects to fit the needs of a situation. However, code switching should hold its place as the preferred term since it is about more than blending; it is about exchanging one linguistic tool for another. Young explains that the concept of accent is enough to make code meshing inescapable. This, of course, only applies to speech and not to writing, and is therefore too limiting in its scope. Accent is a part of dialect, but it is only

one part. And accents can be altered by code switching just as word choice and syntax can.

It is crucial to note that in promoting code switching, I am not advocating dialectal prejudice. All dialects should be validated and treated with the same levels of respect, though one may work better than another in a certain setting. As Jeffrey Reaser notes in his essay on “Dialect and Education in Appalachia,” the educational goal of helping students master academic English “should not be seen as incompatible with the goal of investigating and celebrating language diversity” (106). Wheeler and Swords discuss how they have learned to appreciate nonstandard dialects in their classrooms, making it clear that a student “who speaks in a vernacular dialect is not making language errors; instead, she or he is speaking correctly in the language of the home discourse community” (471). Wheeler and Swords want their students to be successful in various spheres and “believe that a pluralist response to language varieties holds promise for enhancing student performance and positively transforming the language arts classroom” (479). For proponents of code switching (like Wheeler and Swords), it is not all about race or about prejudice, but about being successful communicators, both at home and in other settings. It is about adding language varieties to one’s linguistic toolbox (Wheeler and Swords 473).

Conclusion

Though stigmatized dialect speakers may experience greater discrepancies between the dialects of the discourse communities in which they are involved, all English-speaking persons, both those who speak stigmatized dialects as well as those

who speak more mainstream varieties, must learn to effectively code-switch. Code-switching should ideally be motivated by the goal of communicating effectively in various discourse communities and not by the desire to avoid being stereotyped, but sadly, the latter goal may often be the stronger motivator for many stigmatized dialect speakers. The stigmas attached to dialects like AE and AAVE are unfair, but the prejudicial attitudes toward stigmatized dialect speakers do not mean we should condemn the practice of code switching.

Walt Whitman, in his celebrated poem, “Song of Myself,” paints a picture of his own multiplicity as an individual as well as the multiplicity that characterizes the vast expanse of the United States, blending the two concepts together as he goes. After invoking images of various parts of the country and their residents, he declares, “I resist anything better than my own diversity” (15). Whitman acknowledges unashamedly the fact that his identity is not consistent but is, rather, diversified—he “contains multitudes.” Whitman recognizes the reality that our identities are not consistent or one-dimensional, but have many sides. The varieties of English that characterize our nation shape our individual identities as well. Greater levels of respect and understanding should be afforded stigmatized dialect speakers who struggle with coming to terms with the multifaceted identities they possess as academics and members of their home cultures, but code-switching should also be encouraged as a positive practice for these students as for all speakers. Not only should we celebrate linguistic diversity across our nation, but within the individual as well.

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