Polyphony

Creative Writing, Culture and Criticism | Vol. VI, No. I

POLYPHONY

The Undergraduate English Literature, American Studies, and Creative Writing Journal

Volume 6, Issue i.
First Published March 2024, Manchester.

With thanks to the Professor Ian Scott and EAC Department for their continued funding and Ezra Carlin for technical assistance.

The University of Manchester

Contents

EDITORIAL

As the sunset edges slowly from the afternoon into the evening and the weather gives us leave to put away our bulkier jumpers and winter socks, I could not be happier to present you with *Polyphony's* ninth published issue. Volume Six, Issue i is the first journal to be published under my editorship and I'm incredibly proud of the work of the Senior Leadership Team, our entirely new team of Associate Editors and all of the undergraduate English, American Studies and Creative Writing students whose writing we are publishing this Spring.

Among the critical essays in this issue are a reading of Audre Lorde's seminal 'biomythography' *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* which which uses queer and psychoanalytic theory to understand the text's pedagogical framing of lesbian desire (06), an American Studies essay by Madelaine McDonald which uses Shirley Chisholm's 1972 campaign for the US presidency as a case study in a broader conversation on reductionism in American politics (04) and a deconstruction of the ways in which two novels, published a century apart, similarly present 'Englishness' and it's foil - 'foreignness' - as a formless simplicity and an unfamiliar spectacle respectively (09).

We are also lucky enough to be publishing four creative writing pieces in this issue. Doll Parts by Loretta Gupta uses a poignant and well-crafted metaphor to delve into some of the most pernicious examples of human interaction; managing to maintain an uncanny beauty even in talking about the ugliest of things. Valentina Ashdown's Second Mass, on the other hand, is a short story about repression, desire and God's least favourite angel which hurtles to its sensuous conclusion at a breathtaking pace.

With a fantastic piece of cover art by Xani Stephens, Polyphony Volume 6, Issue i represents an excellent start to our fifth year of publishing as a journal. We all hope you enjoy it.

G. P. Campbell
Editor in Chief – 08/03/2024

Practised and Docile: The Body in Jonathan Swift's 'The Progress of Beauty' and 'A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed'

MAIA HALL, English Literature

Practice and docility, concepts Michel Foucault notes as significant to biopolitics, shape the body in Jonathan Swift's poems 'The Progress of Beauty' and 'A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed'.[1,2] Swift depicts female bodies - specifically those marginalised and prostituted – through the practised acts of dressing and undressing. Arguably fulfilling Foucault's notion of '"docile" bodies', they are rendered useful commodities within the network of patriarchal desire that governs them.[3] Like Foucault, I consider bodies instructed by disciplined practice as mechanical. One definition of mechanical, emerging in the seventeenth century, describes it as: 'Of a person or action: working or operating like a machine; acting or performed without thought; lacking spontaneity or originality; automatic, routine'.[4] The machine-body in both poems is 'automatic, routine', putting on and taking off clothes 'without thought'. A different sense of this relative automatism emerges in Swift's likening of the body to 'mechanical working parts'. Through the process of undressing people are constructed, deconstructed, and itemised; the body is divided into its 'working parts'. By cataloguing the body Swift exposes the fine line between sublime beauty and the grotesque, which might be blurred or even erased through the deconstruction of artifices used to construct 'whole' female bodies.[5] The horror unveiled by stripping away the mechanisms that make the female body desirable becomes a site of satire and a humorous acknowledgement of the grotesque desires of male heterosexuality.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault explores eighteenth century interest in new 'projects of docility' that led to the creation of '"docile" bodies', which Foucault defines as 'a body… that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved' through 'discipline… and [practise]'.[6] This conclusion follows his discussion of 'Man-the-Machine', a concept developed by Descartes and La Mettrie which proposed a dual understanding of the body that remained in the zeitgeist while Swift was writing. Foucault's machine-body emerges through two distinct registers. As John Protevi summarises: 'the body [is] an object of knowledge, an "analysable" and "intelligible" body', and also 'a "manipulable" body found in the "technico-political" register of military, educational, and medical institutions'.[7] The body is not treated 'en masse[…] as if it were an indissociable unity' but rather it is a case of 'working it "retail", individually', undergoing a 'subtle coercion' policing 'movements, gestures, [and] attitudes'. Foucault's mechanistic metaphors extend beyond the 'machine-body' which in itself was 'entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it'.[8] Both of his works position the body as 'analysable' and 'manipulable' through the scrutiny of women's use of cosmetics and prostheses to construct their appearances. Swift breaks down the female body, adding or removing these artifices, focusing on the minutiae that construct gendered bodies. Yet the machine-bodies within the poems are not earnest reflections of Foucault's 'docile' bodies. Instead, Swift's satire and humour deconstruct mechanistic performances of docility to present the grotesque human body underneath.

The Progress of Beauty follows Celia, a prostitute, transforming her 'crack'd lips, foul Teeth, and gummy Eyes' (15) by the 'Workmanship' (40) of her cosmetics and morning routine until she becomes 'the Wonder of her Sex' (42).[9] The 'Progress' operates on many levels: the progression of Celia's dressing; the inevitable decline of her own physical beauty; and the fleeting nature of all women's beauty over time. These 'progresses' are each mechanical, automatic, and inevitable; Celia's narrative operates as one small cog within the larger machine as it generates 'new Nymphs' (100) for the pleasure of the male speaker. The poem begins with 'Diana [leaving] her bed' (1). Here Swift uses Classical allusions to create a mock-heroic tone as he begins to berate the moon goddess for her 'cloudy wrinkled Face' (4). He positions the microcosmic setting of Celia's dressing room alongside the cosmic movement of the moon, immediately drawing focus to the importance of cycles and the inevitability of the passage of time. Swift notes the importance of timekeeping to Celia on numerous occasions, positioning it as central to her masquerade of beauty; cautioning 'If Celia should appear too soon, / Alas, the Nymph would be undone!' (11-12). Celia's struggle against time is also seen in her makeup '[mingling] in her muddy Cheeks' (32) while she sleeps, and the 'four importance Hours' (41) she requires to become 'the Wonder of her Sex' (42). The speaker applauds Celia's efforts, asking 'which among the heav'nly Powers / Could cause such marvellous Effects?' (43-44). Jantina Ellens argues that Swift portrays Celia 'as a disruption of the idealized automaton' and ultimately 'reasserts the fallibility of the artificial and satirizes early modernism's attempts to conquer human mortality by enamelling over its affect'.[10] She notes these references to punctuality reflect the idealisation of the mechanism of the watch, an emerging commodity: 'highly decorated and precise, the ideal clock affirmed the singularity of British male civility'. Significantly, Celia's humanity arrives when she disappoints speaker, who sees that her body will inevitably begin to decay:

> But, Art no longer can prevail,
> When the Materials all are gone;
> The best Mechanick Hand must fail,
> Where Nothing's left to work upon.
> (61-64)

The lines between 'Art' and mechanical object are blurred: Celia's 'Art', her beauty, is constructed by the 'Mechanick Hand'. The juxtaposition of the mechanical with 'art' undercuts the romantic implications that 'artist' would usually represent. Thus, her beauty is depicted as utilitarian, practical, and dispassionate. The rhymes 'prevail' and 'fail' show the inevitability to her decline: a loop enclosing Celia and highlighting the futility of her performance. Ellens notes that 'The poem's rhyme scheme acts as a pendulum swinging back and forth between alternate rhymes; the metre, one iamb short of iambic pentameter, adds urgency while bearing witness to how time falls short'.[11] With the acknowledgement of the fleeting nature of female beauty – see 'rotting Celia' (92) transformed into a syphilitic nightmare - Swift returns to his image of Diana, declaring 'Send us new Nymphs with each new Moon' (100). This cyclical imagery and the circular moon frame the poem within the lunar cycle, showing the brevity of the valuable commodity of beauty that women possess. Celia is inadequate in comparison to the ideal mechanism of the rounded watch. Ultimately 'The best Mechanick Hand must fail' when working with the impermanent material of the flesh.

Swift continues his references to artistry to describe the process of Celia's face painting, positioning woman as both artist and artwork, subject and object, creator and created. Cosmetics are the primary tool in Celia's transformation, and Swift describes them as artist's materials. The artwork of Celia's face is mutable, protean, and begins in a state of disarray after she wakes:

> Three Colours, Black, and Red, and White,
> So graceful in their proper Place,
> Remove them to a different Light,
> They form a frightful hideous Face
> (16-20)

The proximity of beauty and the grotesque is highlighted by the rhyming couplets 'graceful in their proper Place' and 'frightful hideous Face', separated only by a night's sleep. But Celia's unruly body may be controlled and harnessed through her cosmetic artistry: 'By Help of Pencil, Paint and Brush' (34) she is able to restore her initial 'graceful' form and 'reduce[…] each Colour to its Place and Use' (33-35). Swift contrasts the artistic register of 'Pencil, Paint and Brush' with highly utilitarian descriptions of Celia's process of creation. She does not 'create' or 'paint' her face, but instead 'reduce[s]' it through cosmetics, restoring 'each Colour to its Place and Use'. Her face is a skilled and technical work of art, but it is a reduction of herself and not a new creation. The specific 'Use' is to appeal to men, which reinforces that she is not driven by spontaneity or creativity; the process is entirely pragmatic. Both the speaker and Celia esteem her skill in cosmetic artistry. After finishing her makeup, Celia 'fill'd with Admiration stands / As other Painters oft adore / The Workmanship of their own Hands' (39-40). The speaker intertwines artist and artwork, comparing her to 'other Painters' which lends her cosmetic artistry a sense of artistic legitimacy, and the 'Workmanship' she 'adore[s]' is some version of herself, distorted, as 'She knows her early self no more' (37). The rhyming couplet 'stands' and 'Hands' compounds this intermingling of artist and artwork, emphasising how this situation alienates women from their own bodies. Celia is an active artist and a passive artwork, depicted solely through the male voice of the speaker.

A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed serves to develop the discussed issues, depicting the female body as more grotesque, more decayed, and more artificial.[12] Swift's presentation of the artifice of the female body moves from artistry to prostheses, seemingly reflecting Foucault's notion of the machine-body as subject to 'a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it'.[13] The process works to further dehumanise the female body: no longer a canvas to be painted over but something to be entirely disassembled, mutated, and restructured. While Progress opens with Celia's 'frightful hideous Face' before her transformation into a 'lovely Nymph' (55), In Beautiful Young Nymph, Corinna's 'true' body is revealed at the end of the sequence. Swift divides Corinna's body into its parts, focusing on her prostheses, employing the blazon satirically to depict the love-object as grotesque. He chronicles the removal of her 'artificial Hair' (10); 'Crystal Eye' (11); 'Eye-Brows from a Mouse's Hyde' (13); 'Plumpers… That serve to fill her hollow Jaws' (17-18); 'Set of Teeth' (20); 'Rags contrived to prop / Her flabby Dugs' (21-22); 'Steel-Rib'd Bodice' (24); and 'Bolsters that supply her Hips' (28). Her womanhood is even more artificial than Ceila's: her 'dugs' and 'lumps' are the result of careful body modification and prosthesis, the female body itself emerging solely through mechanistic additions. Has the image of a woman become so idealistic it is illusory? Swift's descriptions of the removal of these prostheses and how they function is highly mechanistic: Corinna 'Untwists a Wire' (19) to remove her teeth, and the 'Steel-Rib'd Bodice' contorts her body 'by the Operator's Skill' (25). As Celia uses cosmetics to 'reduce' her natural body to render it consumable, Corinna's highly prosthetic form and its deconstruction reflects the necessary adherence to beauty standards to avoid her nightmares 'Of Bridewell and Compter' (41). She becomes a cyborg of sorts: 'A person whose physical tolerances or capabilities are extended beyond normal human limitations by a machine… an integrated man-machine system'.[14] Yet like Celia, 'she is a disruption of the idealized automaton', imperfect and decaying. Not just her face, but her whole body appears to be decomposing. While Celia loses her nose and teeth towards the end of the poem, 'The Nymph, tho' in this mangled Plight, / Must ev'ry Morn her Limbs unite' (65-66). Left 'scatter'd' (68), Corinna is annihilated by the male speaker and her form is de-structured. Both women, by practised methods or un/dressing, render their own bodies 'docile' in Foucadian terms: under the powers of patriarchy and classism, they must contort and dehumanise their bodies to avoid a punishing fate.

While Celia and Corinna's mechanistic forms may speak to their necessary adherence to the machines of class and gender, Ellens notes that in PB, 'The narrator's disgust stems from his disappointed expectation of an automaton'. It is only through the lens of the male gaze that the female body in its failure to become an unchanging mechanical object becomes grotesque. But in this grotesqueness, these bodies become human: not simply commodities or passive objects. Swift's satire is directed not only at the elaborate, artificial constructions of the female body, but the men who eroticize these constructions with no understanding of the humanity that resides

beneath these 'lovely Nymph[s]' (55). Through their cosmetics and prostheses, Celia and Corinna must sacrifice their personhood, but Swift strips them back to their uncomfortably natural bodies. After Corinna's deconstruction, 'she takes a Bolus e'er she sleeps; / And then between two Blankets creeps' (38-39). The rhyme sympathetically presents the creeping threats that pervade even her 'dreams' (41), in which 'screams' (42) are inevitable. She envisions various fates that haunt women like herself, becoming a synecdoche for all subjected and disenfranchised prostitutes. Male figures of authority pervade this dream-sequence, 'Watchmen, Constables and Duns' (52) who exploit her rather than protect her, appearing as nightmarish as 'the Lash' (42). Swift's critique of male desire is reinforced in his later poem, The Lady's Dressing-Room. Ula Lukszo Klein describes it as having 'perhaps more humour, less melancholy and a more overtly camp affect' than its predecessors, where the only spoken dialogue is the climax of the poem: 'Oh! Celia, Celia, Celia shits!' (117).[15] This climax operates as a kind of 'jouissance' for Klein, both for Swift's delight in the abject and grotesque, but also 'perhaps, ejaculation' for the male voyeur.

Celia and Corinna transcend Foucault's disciplined, "docile" bodies. They are unruly, excessive and grotesquely human under the artifices that render them automata. In her essay 'A Cyborg Manifesto', Donna Haraway positions the notion of the cyborg 'at the centre of [her] ironic faith'.[16] To Haraway, 'the cyborg is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity'. Likewise, Swift's humorous and invasive probing of the human body explodes the private setting of the dressing-room to satirise both women's artifice and the male desire that necessitates it. Significantly, Haraway's cyborg 'is not subject to Foucault's biopolitics', but instead 'the cyborg simulates politics'. Celia and Corinna are not solely disciplined subjects under networks of power or faceless victims of more faceless disciplinaries, but complex multifaceted explorations of how these "docile" bodies are formed, and what is at stake for their own humanity. They are cyborgs: trapped in processes of becoming and unbecoming human. Ironic, intimate, perverse, grotesque, Swift's bodies are synecdochic, small parts of a much larger machine.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

[1] Jonathan Swift, *A beautiful young nymph going to bed*, (London: Dublin printed: London reprinted for J. Roberts in Warwick-Lane, 1734)
[2] Jonathan Swift,'The Progress of Beauty' (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd. 1910), in *The Poems of Jonathan Swift, D.D., VOLUME I* ed. by William Ernst Browning, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/14353/14353-h/14353-h.htm> [accessed on 6 March 2024]
[3] Michael Foucalt, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London, England: Penguin Classics, 2020), p. 2.
[4] Jason David Hall, *Nineteenth-Century Verse and Technology Machines of Meter.* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), <https://link-springer-com.manchester.idm.oclc.org/book/10.1007/978-3-319-53502-9> [accessed on 6 March 2024].
[5] Ibid.
[6] Foucault. p. 2.
[7] Leonard Lawlor,'War', in *The Cambridge Foucault Lexicon*, ed. by John Nale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 540–46
[8] Ibid.
[9] Swift.
[10] Jantina Ellens, 'Wishing for the Watch Face in Jonathan Swift's "The Progress of Beauty"', ABO: Interactive Journal for Women in the Arts 1640-1830, 8.1 (2018), pp.0-14.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Swift.
[13] Foucalt. p. 4.
[14]'cyborg, n. 1.', Oxford English Dictionary Online (Oxford University Press, 2022) < oed.com > [5 March 2024]
[15] Ula Lukszo Klein, 'Swift's Queer Camp,' Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies, 43.3 (2020), pp. 293–302.
[16] Donna J. Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto,' in *Manifestly Haraway* (University of Minnesota Press, 2016), pp. 3–90.

Maia Hall English Literature,

Critique and Lament in Tony Harrison's Poetry

THEO ABBOTT, English Literature

Tony Harrison's poetry stages production of the working-class community's loss. Critique and poetry are performed as complicit in producing this loss, which is staged both within poems and intertextually. This performance skews the balance towards critique over lamentation. The performance of imbalance further explicates this loss.

Them & [uz] was 'first published…as part of a three-poem sequence', including *On Not Being Milton* and *The Rhubarbarians*, poems that frame the loss staged in *Them & [uz]*.[1] Milton's 'sixteen lines' purportedly 'go back to' the speaker's 'roots'(122) by invoking both the Luddite movement and Richard 'Tidd'(122) – a Cato Street Conspirator. The lines ultimately 'go back' to a concluding quote written by Tidd in non-standard English.[2] The speaker thus claims 'roots' in non-academic, radical working-class English communities. The Luddite rebellion is expressed in linguistic terms, with 'ranks' of 'Ludding morphemes' aimed towards 'the looms of owned language'(122), aligning communal working-class resistance against hegemonic power structures with a struggle against hegemonic standards of language and, as metrical 'stress"s(122) suggests, verse. The second stanza stages this struggle. The sibilance produced by the line ending with 'the branks'(122) proliferates into the ensuing ABBA quatrain. The accumulative listing of 'condescension, class and counter-class' demonstrates this proliferation, along with the rhymes 'branks'/'ranks' and 'class'/'mass'(122) which almost produce an AAAA rhyme scheme. Reflecting the torture device's constraint of speech, the branks threaten to impose poetic strictures by homogenising the quatrain into sibilant uniformity.

The following quatrain performs resistance against these sibilant strictures, with its last line split off from the stanza, resisting confinement within the sibilant 'stress/ingloriousness' rhyme and leaving conventional arrangement 'smashed apart!' along with 'the looms of owned language'(122). This exclamatory proclamation immediately precedes the stanza-break that 'smashe[s]' the quatrain 'apart', precipitating this break. The speaker not only identifies with the Luddite's working-class community struggle, but this struggle is even performed as exerting influence over the poem's structure. *The Rhubarbarians*' titular neologism is an example of a novel word construction resulting from working-class rebellion against hegemonic language standards. According to William Fogarty, Harrison also 'aligns himself with his…working-class community' in this poem.[3] These poems' differing representations of linguistic units, with 'glottals' thickening to a 'lumpen mass'(122) in Milton but 'glug[ging]' like 'poured pop'(123) in Rhubarbarians, produce a shift towards greater language fluidity. Paired with the shift towards greater semantic novelty that the neologism creates, this progression implicitly suggests that the speaker's identification with non-standard working-class dialects produces linguistic possibility.

Them & [uz] performs the loss of this empowering association due to externalised poetic critique. The linguistic possibility suggested by the increasingly novel combination of prefixes and suffixes in 'ingloriousness' and 'Rhubarbarians' is fractured and corrected by the harsh pedagogical critique of the speaker's teacher. The speaker recites John Keats's Ode to a Nightingale in speech ('mi 'art') rooted in the northern, working-class communities that Harrison grew up in. The teacher's interruption – 'you barbarian, T.W.!'(133) – echoes 'Rhubarbarians' but in an externalised, punitive voice critiquing young Harrison on grounds of class difference. '[I]ngloriousness' is similarly diminished and fractured to defend traditional language standards in the following sentence; '"Can't have our glorious heritage done to death!"'(133). Here, Harrison portrays criticism based on hegemonic poetic standards as acting as an antagonistic force against linguistic growth in working-class communities. Thus, while parts of this poem sequence productively identify with working-class communities, *Them & [uz]* performs criticism and poetry as causing its loss. Only visible through intertextual study, this loss is staged as subtly insidious, implicitly commenting on the loss of linguistic possibility for working-class communities going unnoticed. This explains the imbalance favouring critique over lament, as the obscurity of this loss refuses both the opportunity and –thwarting working-class expression – perhaps even the ability to lament.

Metre in *Them & [uz]* performs loss of autonomy in the young Harrison's voice as a result of criticism. Two metrical feet before its close, the teacher's first critique of the student's working-class idiolect corrects itself to regular pentameter. The following line, retrospectively lamenting his 'Drunken Porter' role 'in Macbeth' (133), dutifully conforms to this regular metre. Mark Libin notes Harrison's comments, characterising iambic pentameter as 'timeless and connected to…essential functions of the human'.[4] However, Libin later recalls Anthony Easthope's argument that 'metre is a construction that has been normalised to seem natural'.[5] Harrison subverts this position on iambic pentameter, instead staging Easthope's naturalisation. Developing in the teacher's pedagogical criticism, this hegemonic metrical standard takes hold of the succeeding line in a poem otherwise saturated with irregularities like trochaic starts and feminine endings. This line discusses another literary stricture imposed by the teacher – Harrison's marginal prose Macbeth role. The irony of lamenting a marginalised prose role in hegemonic verse form reinforces the performed complicity of criticism and poetry in producing loss. While critique marginalises the student's voice on account of its rootedness in working-class community, poetic form enforces the speaker's conformity with iambic pentameter. Criticism and poetry thus produce loss by fracturing the speaker's

selfhood between the past and present, distancing the conforming poet-speaker from his marginalised working-class origins.

This complex network of fractured destruction – with fractured words performing intertextual loss that feeds into metre performing fractured selfhood – scores Harrison's poetry with a sense of inextricable loss even implicitly present in Milton and Rhubarbarians. Milton's first stanza claim to reach working-class 'roots' is enclosed by the 'call'/'natal'(122) rhyme, in which the 'retour au pays natal' denotes return to a native land. Despite this claim, 'call' and 'natal' only produce a full rhyme if the latter is mispronounced through an anglicisation, undermining the sense of repatriation by emphasising "foreignness". Woven into the poem's essential structure, this dissonance suggests that a poetic tracing of working-class heritage is fundamentally flawed. Here, even Harrison's ostensibly hopeful work implies that poetry is inextricably linked to the poet-speaker's increasingly lost connection with working-class community. Rhubarbarians' rhyme scheme also tacitly demonstrates this inextricability. In the stanza following the intellectually alienating act of translating opera, the speaker says 'Sorry, dad, you won't get that quatrain' and claims the poem is 'all from [him] saying…how…England's rhubarb came from Leeds'(124) in an attempt to maintain his poetry's rootedness in working-class community. The shared [ai] sound between this stanza's 'quatrain'/'train' rhyme and the preceding stanza's 'shame'/'same' stages a structural assertion of continuity between lofty poetic subject matter and working-class origins. However, the lack of full rhyme inextricably stains this attempt at mitigating loss with discontinuity. The rhyme scheme thus weaves doubt into the attempt to trace working-class community through hegemonic poetic forms. The speaker's claim that his dad 'won't get that quatrain' is reflected by the precarious balance between continuity and discontinuity, positive identification and loss. There is a delicate poising between critiquing supposed working-class ignorance and lamenting the alienating nature of intellectual pursuits for undereducated working-class communities.

Instead of achieving this balance between critique and lament, *Them & [uz]* structurally performs its disruption. The first publication's balanced structure (a two-line and fourteen-line stanza followed by the reverse) is disrupted by the lack of rhyming couplet in the terminal two-line stanza, breaking from its reflection with the commencing rhyming couplet. These terminal lines instead form an iterative ABAB rhyme scheme in which Harrison's 'rhymes' are both structurally and literally (through 'mention' in the publication) siphoned into 'the Times'(134). The rhyme also binds a proclamation of working-class expressive diversity ('[uz] can be loving as well as funny') to the Times' correction of 'Tony' to 'Anthony'(134). This corrective critique demonstrates loss of authorial autonomy. The iterative rhyme scheme, already imitating poetry entering publication ('rhymes'/'Times'), extends the correction, replacing autonomous working-class self-definition with critical re-definition from hegemonic language standards. This splintered quatrain thus stages the working-class community's loss of autonomy as producing an overall structural imbalance.

Later publications stage this imbalance's proliferation, fracturing the original structure into 8 variably sized stanzas. Republication's first formatting difference is the 'Drunken Porter' line splitting off from the preceding critique with which it forms a couplet. This structural isolation enacts the working-class student's marginalisation, demonstrated by his marginal role. This split between a three-line and single-line stanza reflects Milton's quatrain in which the first three lines are 'smashed apart' from the last. Crucially, Milton's splitting stages working-class identification as exerting textual influence, whereas here, splitting enacts loss caused by destructive criticism, reinforcing *Them & [uz]*'s intertextual performance of the working-class community's loss of autonomy. Iambic pentameter overwrites the speaker's lamentation of his marginal role with a superficial balance that the structural imbalance undermines. This placatory metrical balance thus performs hegemonic critique. The lamentation of the working-class loss is obscured, while the structural unbalancing's performance of the extended influence of criticism through successive publications reveals this loss as manifesting over time. *Them & [uz]*'s second section affirms this extended loss with a declaration seemingly embodying Milton's rebellious spirit against propertied class:

> So right, yer buggers, then! We'll occupy your lousy leasehold Poetry.(134)

However, this stanza resembles a passage from *Ode to a Nightingale*, in which the speaker vows to utilise a physical embodiment of poetry; 'I will fly…on the viewless wings of Poesy'.[6] Here, an ostensible declaration of rebellion against hegemonic verse standards is revealed. A schoolboy's interrupted poetry recitation is picked up again in the poet's adulthood, staging critique's lasting influence. While rebellion's rhetoric remains here, working-class communal identification is lost to pedagogical critique, demonstrating loss as subtly manifesting over time. The balance here between critique and lament is thus potently askew; lament is both obscured and prevented by critique. Being able to perceive the loss depends on knowledge of canon, a privilege that undereducated working-class communities are cut off from.

Succeeding lines further perform this lost rebellion. The successive non-standard couplet rhymes ('as'/'[uz]' and 'from'/'home') disrupt hegemonic poetic standards, accompanying the concomitant rejection of speech standards, 'dropping…initials' and 'ending sentences with by, with, from'(134). Here, the speaker identifies with working-class community, speaking the 'language that [he] spoke at home'(134). Stanzaic splintering, however, undermines this identification by enclosing it within standard full-rhymed couplets – 'bones'/'Jones' and 'T.W.'/'you'(134). These couplets produce latent loss by staging barriers that suggest rebellion will never escape the poem's confines. Book Ends' containing structure – its final quatrain's ABBA rhyme scheme – produces comparable enclosure that manifests this latent loss. Instead of containing rebellion, this is lost to explicit criticism of working-class writing. The tightly bound couplet of his Dad's 'appalling' 'scrawling' combines with the accumulative asyndetic listing of 'mis-spelt, mawkish, stylistically appalling'(138) to give critique poetic momentum. Lamentation of thwarted expression encloses this critique, with the speaker

straining to 'find the right words' and 'squeeze' in more 'love'(138). Without this interrupting critique couplet, Book Ends' second section would correspond to the Shakespearean sonnet rhyme scheme, conventionally a love mode. Critique is thus staged as thwarting poetry's ability to render working-class loss. The structural imbalance reflects an inability to 'squeeze' in 'love' into the 'stone', representing the working-class community's loss of the speaker's mother.

Tony Harrison's poetry, instead of achieving balance between critique and lament, produces and performs imbalance to demonstrate how critique creates working-class loss and even prevents lament of this loss. Classist critique is performed as pervading poetry to such extent in Harrison's work as to make the two inextricable in complicitly producing this loss. Staging this loss as developing between poems and publications, Harrison implicitly maps it onto the contemporary timeline, as if his poetry's circulation within neoliberal society exacerbates the working-class loss.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

[1] Tony Harrison, 'Them & [uz]', in *Special Collections in University of Leeds Library* <https://library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections/view/546> [accessed 20 March 2023].
[2] Tony Harrison, *Collected Poems* (UK: Penguin, 2016). All references by page number are given in parentheses in the text and from this edition.
[3] William Fogarty, 'The Rhubarbarian's Redress: Tony Harrison and the Politics of Speech', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 66 (2020), 207-232 (p. 207).
[4] Mark Libin, '"Prick-tease of the soul": negative dialectics and the politics of Tony Harrison's v.', *Textual practice*, 31 (2017), 1379-1397 (p. 1383).
[5] Ibid.
[6] Poetry Foundation, 'Ode to a Nightingale', <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/po to-a-nightingale> [accessed 10 March 2023].

Theo Abbott English Literature,

Reductionism and the African American Experience: Lessons from Shirley Chisholm's 1979 Presidential Campaign

MADELAINE MCDONALD, American Studies

In 1972, Shirley Chisholm famously announced that she would be running as a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination. Declaring herself as "the candidate of the people of America," Chisholm outlined her promise that as president she would bring about "peaceful change" both at home and abroad, address environmental issues, implement measures to control money and prevent poverty.[1] In her candidacy announcement, Chisholm makes it clear that she is proud to be a black woman, but that she wishes this not to be the defining aspect of her presidential run. Several recent scholars have examined the importance of Chisholm's activism and political advancements for both Black people and women, but Anastasia Curwood notes that the tendency of scholars to focus on the implications of Chisholm's race and gender "at times obscures her larger political and intellectual significance."[2] Reductionism has been a large part of the African American experience and until recently, the scholarship surrounding it. In 'The Long Civil Rights Movement,' Jacquelyn Dowd Hall argues that past scholarship has misrepresented aspects of the civil rights movement through reduction of time, geography, the aims and priorities of notable activists such as Martin Luther King.[3] Hall holds scholars accountable for forming public opinion on civil rights, and urges them to address the areas which still pose issues today, rather than focusing solely on the aspects of the Black freedom struggle that have been "resolved" by legislation.[4] This essay will analyse Shirley Chisholm's run for presidency, in particular her presidential candidacy announcement, in comparison to what scholars have written about Chisholm and her politics. I will demonstrate how the misrepresentation of Chisholm's political identity exemplifies the broader theme of reductionism within the African American experience, whereby she and other activists have been overlooked, underestimated, and misunderstood by their white counterparts, and scholars of the black freedom struggle.

First, it is important to understand that due to the generally accepted period of the civil rights movement, Black female activists and their approach to feminism have generally been excluded from the narrative. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall argues that the dominant narrative sets the decline of the civil rights movement as "follow[ing] hard on the heels of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights acts," meaning the events of the late 1960s onwards "become nothing more than identity politics." [5] While the feminist movement is generally considered to have started in the early 1960s, Patricia Hill refers to this feminism as a "false universal" and says "womanism," or Black feminism, peaked in the 1970s and 1980s as Black women began voicing their dissatisfaction with the white-washed feminist discourse.[6] Hall recognises that in adopting this reductionist approach, scholars and the public opinion that they inspire "avoid uncomfortable questions about the relationship between cumulative white advantage and present social ills."[7] Is it a coincidence that we teach school children about the outlawed Jim Crow laws but not the ongoing experience of Black women? It is unsurprising therefore that Chisholm, as Curwood writes, "retains a somewhat mythological and under-examined status in American History." [8] When Chisholm has been recognised, scholars appear to focus on the political objectives that directly relate to her 'character' and outward expression of identity, at the expense of her other political priorities.

Chisholm's role as a Black female politician and her being the first Black person and first woman to run for a Democratic party nomination is a great achievement which had implications for the future position of Black people and women in political and social spheres, as well as defining aspects of Chisholm's approach to politics. Yet, there is a danger in fixating on this aspect of her identity, as it has the potential to overshadow her other priorities and simplify her overall presidential run. When analysing Chisholm's presidential announcement, it is important to acknowledge that this is a public speech, the purpose of which is to win votes. Some assume therefore, that the content of this source only reflects her public opinion and desire to win votes, rather than her genuine political objectives. However, she prefaces her presidential goals by highlighting, "I am not the candidate of black America, although I am black and proud. I am not the candidate of the women's movement of this country, although I am a woman and I'm equally proud of that."[9] The fact she chooses to open her address in this way emphasises her desire to be politically seen as a whole, free from limitations imposed by her identity. Additionally, she goes on to address the "political manipulation, deceit and deception" the Nixon administration returned, stressing her promise for an honest and inclusive time in office if she were to be named president.[10] Therefore, I believe the policies she goes on to outline reflect her genuine political desires. Chisholm states her aim to create a new America by "stop[ping] the abuse of the environment"; providing "freedom from violence and war at home and abroad" and "freedom from poverty and discrimination"[11]. Not only were these principles overlooked by scholars, but immediately after she gives her speech, a reporter mentions, "You represent a trend for more women and specifically black women to get involved with politics and go after elected office in this country."[12] While this is true, admitted by Chisholm herself, and it only reflects an aspect of her address, given that Chisholm opens her speech by explicitly stating that she was not a candidate of black America, nor the women's movement. Therefore, this comment by the reporter is ignorant and reductive. Tammy L. Brown critiques the "many contemporary commentators" who "lacked the language to adequately discuss and make sense of the political phenom," a statement which ironically

appears to be relevant to the scholarship around Chisholm.[13]

Scholarly articles on Chisholm almost always draw on her outward physical expression. Brown speaks about how her "self-presentation was a political statement," going on to discuss her "slender physique," "signature wigs," and even "eyeglasses."[14] The fascination with appearance is an inconsistency between the treatment of men and women in politics, as well as other industries, which to this day has not been adequately addressed. An analysis of physical appearance can be relevant when making an extended argument relating to Chisholm's political ambitions, but Tammy L. Brown dedicates an entire section to Chisholm's "Personal Style and Visual Politics."[15] Admittedly, physical expression is an issue more relevant to the experience of women than Black Americans, but in this case it highlights the broader, damaging and dehumanising theme within the Black freedom struggle of being reduced to a single, or handful of attributes. Scholarly comments around Chisholm's appearance are not specific to Brown and suggest an inability to look past her superficial expression. By only analysing aspects of Shirley Chisholm and what she represented, scholars run the risk of misunderstanding key details about her presidential run, such as her support networks. In her article, Anastasia Curwood recognises the importance of Chisholm's economic objectives. Curwood explains that Chisholm's desire to provide everyone with "medical care and employment and decent housing"[16] allowed her to "build support for her presidential campaign within the Black Panther Party" due to their shared survival interests.[17] In failing to acknowledge her economic policies, other scholars display Chisholm's political character and methods in a light alternate to her intention. The implications of distorting the aims or methods of activists in the wider Black freedom struggle is that it enforces the narrative that the issues civil rights activists were campaigning for have been sufficiently addressed, thus preventing further political, social, and economic advances to promote racial equality. In 'The Long Civil Rights Movement,' Hall references the speech given by Martin Luther King at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom to illuminate how overstating a particular aim of one activist can distort the narrative. Hall recalls how the media coverage and subsequent scholarship surrounding the march and King's speech has led both scholars and public opinion to the belief that the aims of King and the march were to obtain *de jure* political equality, omitting objectives aimed at achieving economic racial and gender equality.

Another way scholars have unintentionally undermined Chisholm's political career and run for presidency is by casting her as a predecessor for others, rather than separately appreciating the revolutionary achievements she herself made. In 'Shirley Chisholm: Catalyst for Change,' Stephen Marble recognises the significance of Chisholm's economic and anti-war policies, but the tone and wording of his argument implies he views Chisholm's career as a precedent for subsequent Black people and women to make political advances.[18] This is a common argument surrounding the life and career of Shirley Chisholm. Debora F. Atwater recognises that former president "Obama stands on the shoulders of other African Americans that ran for the office of the president, starting with Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm."[19] Chisholm's campaign undoubtedly impacted the subsequent success of both Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton. However, this does not discredit the many legislative gains she made in her time as a politician, such as extending unemployment benefits to domestic workers and introducing a 1975 bill to fund childcare services. Tera W. Hunter says, "[Chisholm] ran to pave the way for others and to garner attention for issues that other candidates had failed to adequately address," implying Shirley Chisholm had no intentions of becoming president herself.[20] Marble recalls Chisholm's response to a moderator who questioned her presidential ability in a candidacy debate in California, which categorically negates Hunter's argument; "I could serve as the President of this country. Believe it or not; that's why I am running."[21]

In conclusion, this essay illustrates that Shirley Chisholm is most famous for being a martyr for the Black freedom struggle and the Women's movement, despite her multifaceted political approach. The misrepresentation of her objectives by reporters, commentators, and then scholars, is due to the inability of people to see past a simplified representation of her based on race and gender. The treatment of Chisholm exposes the broader issue of reductionism within the Black freedom struggle. This conveys that the dominant narrative of the civil rights movement excludes Black women, and that when acknowledged, activists are confined to scholarly projection of what they *should* represent in the Black freedom struggle. By reducing Shirley Chisholm to 'identity politics,' scholars misrepresent her overall political ambitions and focus on non-economic issues, which distort overall public opinion and narrative, leading to the belief that specific issues no longer require addressing. Actively addressing the tendency to reduce activists and their policies, aims, and methods, could allow scholars of the history of race to have a better understanding of activists and the overall Black freedom struggle in the United States. Most significantly, the acknowledgment that certain aims have been overlooked, such as the economic disparity Chisholm and King both attempted to address, could establish the potential to progress and address these problems in modern day politics.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

[1] Shirley Chisholm, *Shirley Chisholm: Declares Presidential Bid* (New York City, January 25 1972) in NYC Department of records, Municipal Archives <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3JCX3WxBik> [accessed 11 January 2022].

[2] Anastasia Curwood, 'Black Feminism on Capitol Hill: Shirley Chisholm and Movement Politics, 1968-1984', *Meridans*, 13.1, (2015) 204-232, (204)

[3] Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, 'The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past', *The Journal of American History*, 19.4 (2005), 1233-63, (1234).

[4] Hall, 'The Long Civil Rights Movement', 1262.

[5] Hall, 'The Long Civil Rights Movement', 1254.

[6] Patricia Hill Collins, 'WHAT'S IN A NAME? Womanism, Black Feminism, and Beyond', *The Black Scholar*, 26.1, (1996), 9-17.

[7] Hall, 'The Long Civil Rights Movement', 1262.

[8] Curwood, 'Black Feminism on Capitol Hill', 204.

[9] Chisholm, Declares Presidential Bid.
[10] Chisholm, Declares Presidential Bid.
[11] Chisholm, Declares Presidential Bid.
[12] Chisholm, Declares Presidential Bid.
[13] Tammy L. Brown, "A New Era in American Politics': Shirley Chisholm and the Discourse of Identity.', *Callaloo*, 31.4 (2008) 1013-1025 (1014).
[14] Brown, 'New Era in American Politics', 1021.
[15] Brown, 'New Era in American Politics', 1021.
[16] Chisholm, Declares Presidential Bid.
[17] Curwood, 'Black Feminism on Capitol Hill', 224.
[18] Stephen Marble, 'Shirley Chisholm: Catalyst for Change', *Black History Bulletin*, 74.2, (2011) 6-12.
[19] Atwater, Deborah F, 'Senator Barack Obama; The Rhetoric of Hope and the American Dream',*Journal of Black Studies*, 38.2, (2007) 121–29 (121).
[20] Tera W. Hunter, et al, The Forgotten Legacy of Shirley Chisholm: Race versus Gender in the 2008 Democratic Primaries." *Obama, Clinton, Palin: Making History in Election 2008* (2011) 66-85.
[21] Marble, 'Shirley Chisholm: Catalyst for Change'.

Madelaine McDonald American Studies,

Second Mass

VALENTINA ASHDOWN, Creative Writing

Content Warning for explicit sexual reference.

I stood, beholding the cross as heavenly hymns echoed around me. The assembled swayed beneath glittering light streaming in from stained-glass windows at the church's apse. A sea of grey suits, flowery dresses and squeaky black shoes, standing and sitting and kneeling under the eyes of the 'Almighty' every Sunday of my nineteen-year long life. No matter the sermon or stimulus, I always studied the ruby drip that slides down the leg of the sacrificial lamb on the cross before me. The way it glints when the rainbow of light hits it at times had me wondering if it was a precious gem, glued down to exemplify his value.

In the midst of my trance, my father's wrinkled hand clasped over the wool on my shoulder, making me relax my furrowed brow before making eye contact. I was wearing an apple-red cardigan to cover my shoulders, which were left exposed in my white dress. We had argued before leaving the house about me wearing such a dress; he said I wasn't covered enough, I thought the cut was pretty enough for church. Compromise. The only way I could reclaim my pride was by tying up my hair in a ribbon, its shade a rich merlot. They said my hair always looked prettier held up...

'You'd best be going home now, Volta. You're going to miss bible-study,' he told me, and my mother tutted and told me to pull down my skirt as I gathered my things. This is how Sundays went. Church in the morning, after which my parents stayed to go and pray to Saints, or chat to Father, or gossip with the nuns from the nearby cathedral whenever they visited. The nuns always smelled of lavender and out-of-date body lotion, so I knew whenever my mother had been talking to them. Those sisters with their infinite wisdom and endless knowledge of who's doing what and why in town. While my parents gorged on their faith, I went online for an all-girls bible study. I used to go to one at our church, but father said he didn't like the way one of the boys looked at me, despite having attended maybe three times.

Then when they got home, we always had a takeaway and talked about today's sermons, which frequently turned into some more generally righteous conversation. A common topic was discussing who they think is going to get raptured from church. The same five people would never make it, with frequent new additions. This week it was Helen from down the road. She was a single mother who always brought her two children to church. What had she done? She let her son have his headphones in during hymns. 'The devil is everywhere, Volta. You have to have your wits about you.'

I took their warning to heart that night as I pulled my white dress back on once they had gone to bed. I discarded that modest cardigan but permitted the ribbon to stay. I only needed two things; matches and a red candle.

Ivy shifted beneath my boots when I climbed out of my window onto the covered wall, fearing a fall onto the hard concrete. Once down, my rubbery soles wouldn't be safe from a trip thanks to a carpet of leaf-sludge that coated the rustic garden path to the blackened streets of my little parish. Always there to make sure I look at my feet while walking.

I followed the graves of paupers and wealthy men alike around to the back of this religious building, taking me past the towering, spiked spires and elaborate buttresses of the ancient church. There, a dark congregation beamed at me from beneath their cloaks. In the moonlight, their thick garments looked merely shades of warm or cold black, but each member I knew wore a unique shade. Most wore between forest greens, navy blues, ripe plums, and crimson tones, but a few opted for a seasonally appropriate autumnal orange or mustard yellow. 'Lamb, you have finally joined us. I had been worried you changed your mind about becoming a sister.'

'No, I am ready,' Meredith smiling at my eagerness, she takes my hand into hers. The skin is soft, with a speckling of age and her rivers of faintly turquoise veins. Her hazel eyes were warm like a hearth as she drew me closer to her and the coven. Twelve months I had been waiting to officially join these members, who were remaining more distant than usual. They had already taught me all they could for the ritual to be a success. If all went to plan, I would emerge a real witch.

Meredith nodded, causing her thin, blonde hair to bob softly as her carmine lips seemed to curl into an even more excited smile. 'Each of us were once lambs, like you, so we cannot join you. This is between you and Him. Only you have the strength to complete the ritual. Per aspera ad inferi…' The older woman crossed herself starting from the bottom, her action and words then echoed by the cloaked group strewn across the graveyard. I took a deep breath and muttered, 'Per aspera ad inferi.'

I turned to face the stained glass before crouching to pick up a large stone and throwing it at the centre. The crash was loud, but nobody would've heard it other than the coven, who were all chattering amongst themselves and buzzing with anticipation. Some of these figures were beginning to hum and dance together, becoming exhilarated by their own memories of their initiation rituals. A much less solemn gathering than what occupy these grounds during the day. The second stone I picked up was kept in my palm as I made determined strides toward the stone wall. I clumsily began to climb until I reached the window ledge, finally able to gaze down at the pews that my family had been sat in that morning through the fresh hole in the glass. The ordered rows of scarlet cloth and dark wood, overlooked by beige brick and judging angels. Then I began to take the point of the stone to the loosened glass, smashing in a circle until a person-sized hole appeared.

One look back at the smiling mouths of the witches, some with their hoods down due to their celebratory movements. Straight ahead, then straight down.

When I jumped, I landed in a pool of technicolour glass, dyed red by the carpet underneath. The church was pitch black inside except the moonlight coming from the same place I did. Attempting to sit up, my hand sliced into by a shard. I raised my hand to observe how nectar drooled down my arm. 'Shit-' I instinctively hissed out. It felt strange to swear in the church I had feigned innocence in for so long. An anxiety around disobeying lingered in the back of my mind like an instinct. But it's not natural, it's their influence on me- an influence that would fail on many levels that night. I picked up the largest glass shard I could see.

To prepare, I set down the red candle on the altar, melting the bottom of it with a match so it would stick down to the mahogany. The same match

is what I used to light the candle. Watching the flame dance seductively, my trance gave me the courage to jab into my palm deeper with the glass I picked up. Gritting my teeth from the pain, I began my bloody work of art. A five-pointed star within a circle on the ground, which I then surrounded by a second circle. The gap in between the lines was filled with the incantation I had been muttering in Latin, roughly translating to 'bringer of knowledge, lover of man,/unleash me into thy hands'. My life's essence shined up at me as I stepped out of the circle.

I took in a breath, trying to soothe the chaos of the worry and excitement inside me. I stated my name, repeated the incantation a final time, and finally blew out the candle.

'What?' I gasped, suddenly in darkness for a moment as if the moonlight had been cast out of the room. Moments later, a warm glow began illuminating the alter from behind me. The light began to slowly become brighter until the whole church had a rosy hue. There was a heavy presence. It felt like being stood next to a black hole and I was being sucked in more by the second. Each cell in my body slowly turned to face this pulling void and when finally my whole head had turned around- all air left my lungs.

Searing white eyes buried in a pitch-black body with the form of an angular human, licks of this dark flame swirling around its arms, a pair of horns adoring His head like a brutal crown. These eyes were Venus and Mercury if the rest of space didn't exist. Two perfect pearls, iridescent and shifting but without a firm surface or the smoothness of a sphere. They were stable, unlike the wild darkness they were buried in. I couldn't look away, for they cradled my fear with an unmatched tenderness. Venus because it is white and I had never seen anything more beautiful. Mercury because it is white and under His gaze I never felt more known. I held out my hand, as I had been suggested to do. He took a hold of it, the cuts from my fall sealing as He sweetly seared my skin. It wasn't a burn, but a kiss of needles. The closer I was to Him, the more my senses were able to comprehend. His scent was drowning out my thoughts with something new. There was herbal smoke from an elusive incense, familiar yet far away, and faint crackling breaths were fanning against my cheeks. I almost didn't notice His other hand reaching around my head, pulling my red ribbon loose; pulling a shaky breath from me.

'You look better with your hair down…' His voice reverberated through my mind and against the walls. I felt my knees turning weak with need for Lucifer's touch. I leant back against the alter, my free hand moving to rest upon the form of His dark shoulder. The flames curled around me and the warmth shivered up my arm. My eyes fixated upon His, as I bore his molten mass against the bare skin of my thighs.

I could feel a ruby run down my leg, and I moaned out in sin.

Valentina Ashdown Creative Writing,

Defining the Erotic: Motherhood and Pedagogy in *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*

EMELINE FORTON, English Literature

Women revolve around Audre Lorde in *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* and expose her to presentations of female sexuality that serve to comfort, educate, and structure the protagonist of this biomythography. Lorde subtitles *Zami* as a 'biomythography', this neologism framing the narrative as a stylistic retelling of her life experiences as opposed to a conventional autobiography. Thus, her protagonist becomes the character of Audre, whom I will separate from the writer, Lorde, herself. Whether through her mother, sisters, close-friends or lovers, Lorde details encounters with female desire and passion as well as sexual obligation. Through these, she uncovers the Erotic as a phenomenon that "flows through and colors [her] life with a kind of energy that heightens and sensitizes and strengthens all of [Lorde's] experience."[1] In this textual analysis, I want to examine how the Erotic is presented and interpreted in the text, namely through a psychoanalytic lens. Not only will I draw upon secondary criticism that argues for the presence of Freudian ideology in *Zami*, but I will also define what is and is not considered Erotic in the Lordian understanding, ultimately concluding that eroticism may be defined differently by various theorists.

According to early psychoanalytic studies, for instance, *Freud's Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), the erotic attachment to a parent is a vital stage in subject development and eventually evolves into the parent becoming an unexpressed object of the child's adult sex-drive.[2] In Audre's case, her mother's frustrated and emotionally unavailable lifestyle impacts her perceptions of sexuality and desire as she matures. On this level, the Erotic connotes oedipal configurations, in which Lorde's want for maternal intimacy manifests into a physical desire for her mother, and other mother-inspired figures in her life. This is evidenced when Lorde imagines her mother in the domestic sphere:

> I would have a fantasy of my mother, her hands wiped dry from the washing, and her apron untied and laid neatly away, looking down upon me lying on the couch, and then slowly, thoroughly, our touching and caressing each other's most secret places.[3]

The archetypal image of the domestic mother is evoked in Lorde's description of her mother's clothing – an "apron untied and laid neatly away." Not only is Linda Lorde associated with the domestic through her appearance, but she is also given conventional hierarchical status as a powerful mother, ready to discipline. This is indicated by her "looking down upon" Audre, as she lies vulnerable on the couch. This existing power imbalance is challenged through Audre's sexual fantasies whereby mother and daughter gain equality. Indeed, Audre fantasises about them "touching and caressing" each other's genitals. She desires this eroticism for her own pleasure, but also seeks to erotically please her mother. This sexually reciprocal relationship that Lorde depicts may be the radical extreme of what she desires from her mother in reality: a mutualistic, respecting, and honest mother-daughter relationship. Rather, Lorde documents herself experiencing an authoritarian parenting style which inhibits her idiosyncratic development (for instance, her eyesight), as well as her blossoming sexuality and independence.

Whilst Lorde writes a mother-daughter relationship that does conform to Freud's oedipal configurations, interestingly, she also denies components of early psychoanalyst theory; this claimed that a major process in female adolescent development was becoming heterosexually orientated. This involved positing greater emphasis on the relationship with the paternal rather than the maternal figure and becoming active in the 'libidinal mode'.[4] In *Zami*, however, we see that despite the obviously masculine hegemony presented in the neighbourhood, the home, and the school in which Audre attends, she does not experience the same sexual desire towards her distant father than with her mother. Indeed, when she does become "libidinal[ly]" active, she refutes the typical substitution from clitoral eroticism to vaginal eroticism, maintaining a close relationship with female-centric pleasure that requires no male input. This is evidenced during her days spent in the kitchen, preparing food with a pestle and mortar. Lorde describes how she "rubbed and pressed the moistening spice into readiness with a sweeping circular movement" (*Zami*, p.90), this being reminiscent of clitoral masturbation. The use of the intimate and sensual verbs "rubbed and pressed" and the resultant "moistening" arousal indicates no desire for male, phallic penetration, and thus Lorde denies Freudian ideology which details the presence of instinctive heterosexual desire in the home. In this case, a psychoanalytical lens is not appropriate to wholly depend upon when understanding discourses of sexuality in *Zami*. As discussed in Alice E. Adam's *Making Theoretical Space*, psychoanalysis "has a history of quarantining homosexuality and homosexuals" and subjecting it to exclusionary practices.[5] Whilst Audre does experience desire in the home, this is a result of her eagerness for maternal intimacy and insecurity in the domestic sphere, rather than experiencing penile envy due to a recognition of the patriarchal standards surrounding her.

Certainly, language of the "home" is utilised in a sexual manner to indicate Lorde's insecurity in the family. Describing her life during the war, Lorde writes, "I so often felt I had died and wakened up in a hell called home" (Zami, p.95). This alliterative identification Lorde creates between "hell" and "home" contradicts later usages of the noun, particularly when describing her affairs with women.

After her first night spent with a female lover, Lorde chronicles how "loving Ginger that night was like coming home to a joy I was meant for [. . .]" (*Zami*, p.162). For Lorde, "home" is associated with a sense of belonging, connection and strengthening of the self. It is these emotions that she experiences predominantly during sexual encounters with women, rather than in the heteronormative family home, and leads her to later define this in connection with the Erotic.

In her essay, "Uses of the Erotic" from her publication *Sister Outsider* (1984), Lorde describes eroticism as the "assertion of the life force of women" (*Sister Outsider*, p. 45) and the root of all human creative power, which she believes is awakened in her through female relationships. Specifically, her relationship with Afrekete in the dénouement of her biomythography evidences this Erotic phenomenon experienced during lesbianism and the celebration of female sexuality. Lorde writes, "Afrekete taught me roots, new definitions of our women's bodies – definitions for which I had only been in training to learn before" (*Zami*, p.297). Here, Lorde places emphasis on the pedagogical aspect of female sexuality and eroticism, claiming that she has learned from Afrekete an understanding of women that she was denied of in her maternal education.

Indeed, pedagogy and teaching typically falls under the category of maternal labour, an expectation placed upon mothers to educate their children. Linda's choice to directly avoid the Erotic, for instance, naming genitalia through "euphemisms of the body" (*Zami*, p.32) indicates that she perceives female sexuality in the Lordian pornographic term. Lorde defines pornographic as a "plasticised sensation" (*Sister Outsider*, p.44) and the direct rejection of the Erotic. In perceiving sexuality as purely a necessity, not a joy, and a shameful or unspoken element of family life, Linda represents the "suppression of true feeling" (*Sister Outsider*, p.44), limiting Lorde's exposure to and understanding of sexuality and eroticism during her youth. This is further emphasised during Linda's own experience in the domestic sphere. Harkening back to the pestle and mortar, Linda differs from Lorde's "sweeping circular movement" of the pestle, and rather "thump[s . . .] wood brought down heavily upon wood" and Lorde "felt the harsh impact throughout [her] body, as if something had broken inside of [her]" (*Zami*, p.90). Unlike Lorde, her mother chooses to approach the pestle and mortar denying the Erotic, valuing only efficiency and productivity, and thus embodying a pornographic approach.

Presentations of female sexuality in *Zami*'s Erotic therefore can be inferred both as an expression of a fundamental stage in psychosexual development and an empowering process of learning that extends beyond the Freudian model. Whilst psychoanalytic theory is applicable to Lorde's condition in the text and contributes to a large component of feminist cultural studies, the heterosexual limitations placed upon queer and lesbian texts interpreted adjacently to psychoanalytic theory leave this mode of analysis redundant upon certain occasions. Rather, it is beneficial to understand the Erotic in *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* through Lorde's own narrative understanding of human creativity and passion, as discussed in her seminal text *Sister Outsider*. Through conceptualising lesbian relationships as the theoretical classroom for understanding the Erotic, readers of *Zami* open themselves up to wider understandings of Eroticism that push the boundaries of artistic creativity and theoretical space.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

[1] Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider* (London: Penguin Classics, 2019) p.47.
[2] Bethny Jacobs, ''Mothering Herself: Manifesto of the Erotic Mother in Audre Lorde's "Zami: A New Spelling of My Name"', *Melus*, 40.4 (2015), 110-128 (p.111).
[3] Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling Of My Name* (London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2018), p.88.
[4] Nancy Chodorow, 'Mothering, Object-Relations, and the Female Oedipal Configuration', *Feminist Studies*, 4.1 (1978), 137-158 (145) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3177630> [Accessed 8 February 2024].
[5] Alice Adams, 'Making Theoretical Space: Psychoanalysis and Lesbian Sexual Difference', *Signs*, 27.2 (2002), 473-499 (474) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3175789> [Accessed 8 February 2024].

Emeline Forton English Literature,

The Venetian Façade: Theatrical Architecture in Charles Dickens' and Henry James' Venice

SAM COLLIER, English Literature

For travel writers in Venice in the nineteenth-century, the city's beauty is an experienced bliss, and one most crucially represented in its architecture. Firstly, the Piazza San Marco becomes the pivotal symbol through which both Charles Dickens, in *Pictures of Italy*, and Henry James, in *The Aspern Papers*, seek to express the beauty of Venice as a whole.[1] Through its political and cultural significance, the Piazza has come to be understood, so Iain Fenlon puts it, as a 'barometer of Venetian history and identity', and therefore a symbol of the city itself.[2] Here, both writers find themselves experiencing, rather than simply viewing, its grand structures. It appears in both texts with an unreal quality, as either a 'theatre' or 'stage' (*AP* p. 142) for James, or as a 'dream upon the water' (*PI* p. 85) for Dickens. We shall see that these qualities are a deliberately intended product of their architectural conception. From this, we shall also note how the architecture of the Piazza is echoed in the domestic sphere, establishing even the private settings of the respective writers as microcosms of the city, where its performative quality is continued. Furthermore, the nature of this performance is evidently inconsequential. The dialogue between Classical and Gothic architecture that was occurring in the century – a dialogue that both writers embodied in their other writings – is notably absent in these descriptions of Venice. Where the classical architecture of London is a source of oppression, the constant reminder of Venice's imperial ruin undermines any attempt of architectural imposition. The only feeling that it invokes, then, is entertainment, like a theatre of stately grandeur, 'at once place and dream, substance and shadow'.[3]

The unreal and experiential quality of Venice is embodied in both texts using architecture, where Venice is performed before their exhausted eyes, at once becoming part play and part dream. The narrator of *The Aspern Papers* finds himself wandering the city, first comparing it to an apartment, then to a theatre. The former comparison is better understood after considering the latter, wherein the city appears like a theatre through comparisons drawn on architectural bases. He describes how the actors click 'over bridges' and trip 'along fondamentas' *(AP*, p. 143), the latter being an Italian word that is defined as 'walkways alongside a canal', and therefore a uniquely Venetian architectural feature of the city.[4] The proximity of the mention of the 'Piazza San Marco' as the 'most ornamented corner' (*AP*, p. 142) is of particular importance here, as the architecture of the square has enabled it take on the role of a theatre for the whole city. Margaret Muther D'Evelyn points out how in the designing of the Sansovino Library, eponymous architect Jacopo Sansovino drew on classical notions of the Roman forum and Greek *agora*, where elevated, external walkways 'served as viewing platforms' from which one 'would have looked down on spectacles in the public arena'.[5] Given our preliminary assertion of the Piazza being a symbol of the city as a whole, it is no stretch to take from this that the whole of the city, as James perceives, takes on the role of a theatre. Indeed, Venice's own celebrated architect Daniele Barbaro, peer to Sansovino, proclaimed just this in his commentary of Roman architect Vitruvius, saying that 'Once theaters... were in Rome; now entire cities are themselves theaters'.[6] For James' narrator, then, the city is entirely performative.

It is also important to establish that the narrator is physically exhausted while observing this architecture. In a haze of disgust brought upon by an unexpected marriage proposal, the narrator finds himself unsure of his own recollection of events, asking rhetorically 'Was it before this or after that I wandered about for an hour[?]' (*AP*, p. 142). This exhaustion precedes his descriptions of Venice and is consolidated when the paragraph after begins with 'I went to bed that night very tired' (*AP*, p. 143). The descriptions of Venice's architecture then come across as surreal and dream-like, a feeling certainly shared by Dickens. He too beholds the structures with an unsure recollection, writing 'I thought I entered the Cathedral' (*PI*, p. 80) and 'I dreamed that I was led on' (*PI*, p. 81), imbuing his recollections of the city's architecture with a sense of unbelievability, a doubt in its reality. The Piazza San Marco, too, is 'surrounded by a light and beautiful arcade', framing an 'enchanted scene' (*PI*, p. 80), once again invoking theatrical architecture, but here it takes on the role of both audience and spectacle, as the square is beheld as an 'enchanted scene'. This performative dimension of Venice's architecture saves its dream-like qualities from becoming nightmarish. Jeremy Tambling considers how in his earlier novel *Martin Chuzzlewit*, Dickens grants his English architecture with the sense of being 'a dream within a dream'.[7] This dream-like quality creates a 'labyrinthine structure' for Tambling, a structure with no inside or outside where one is unable to 'confer individuality'.[8] Without structure, the labyrinthine architecture of London becomes a source of invasive anxiety. In Venice, meanwhile, despite similarly having 'labyrinths of rich altars' (*PI*, p. 83), the dream qualities of its architecture are neutralized by its theatrical qualities, making it seem like simply a performance. Because it is only a 'scene', and for James even a 'comedy' (*AP*, p. 143), Venice's dreaminess is at most pleasant rather than unsettling, and its grandeur is embodied in structures devoid of imperial threat.

The performative qualities of Venice's architecture deliberately extend to its private architecture. In both the works of James and Dickens, Venice at large is recreated in miniature in the smaller domestic architecture they both describe, and once again, the Piazza San Marco becomes a pivotal point of architectural translation

between Venice as a city and the private domicile. The previously mentioned loggias of the Sansovino Library, for example, can be directly compared to the balconies of private homes. D'Evelyn points out how Vitruvius, who heavily inspired the Renaissance styles of Palladio and Barbaro, used the word *maenianum* (an architectural feature which Sansovino used as model for the loggias on his library) primarily to 'refer to the balcony of a private house in a comic scene in the theater'. [9]D'Evelyn also notes from this how Palladio and Barbaro themselves saw the ubiquitous balcony in Venice as being 'related to the ancient amphitheater'.[10] Such ubiquitous design is indeed not only present in *The Aspern Papers*, but also directly compared to famous pieces of theatrical literature. Stirred by the delicious air of the canal to think of Romeo's vows at Juliet's balcony, the narrator looks up at the palace he is staying at to see if 'the example of Verona had been followed' (*AP*, p. 83). He looks up to see the house 'dim, as usual, and... still' (*AP*, p. 83), which appears more like refuting a comparison of poetic beauty than of architectural similarity. Indeed, for Dickens too, 'Shakespeare's spirit was abroad upon the water somewhere' (*PI*, p. 84) as he too is drawn to think of the bard's famous tragedies that took place in the city, like *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice* while 'below stone balconies, erected at a giddy height' (*PI*, p. 84). It is under these balconies of domestic architecture that line the city's canals that the theatre of Venice is performed; not only in the public Piazza San Marco, but also in the canals and gardens of private space.

This comparison of Venice's public architecture extends into the interior of domestic space too. Dickens, for example, sees the whole city reflected on the walls of its private spaces. He notes how while he 'wandered on from room to room... through... decayed apartments', he feels 'the city... with its very stones and bricks... liv[ing] again... on the walls' (*PI*, p. 83). We can see in this that crucially, it is through the material of its architecture that Venice is seen in its domestic space, built of its 'stones and bricks' on the stones of bricks of its private houses. For James, too, the house that his narrator stays in lends itself to being compared to a city, and once again, the Piazza San Marco is a crucial point of comparison here. Its aspect of a central square is immediately present in the house's Sala, or grand hall. The narrator is so smitten with its 'magnificent measure' that he worries at the idea that 'it would not form a part of [his] *quartiere*' (*AP*, p. 70). This latter Italian word is more often used to refer to a 'quarter or district' of a city, but here it is used to describe his corner of the house.[11] In this way, the house is enlarged into a city in a parallel sense to how the city of Venice is later imagined having 'the character of an immense collective apartment' (*AP*, p. 142). The house is a city just as the city is a house. Even the 'scagliola floor' (*AP*, p. 58) of the Sala is a deliberate feature implemented to 'imitate marble', much how like the floor of the Piazza San Marco was paved with 'Istrian stone', a stone used in Venetian architecture for its likeness to marble.[12] James was certainly enamoured with the domestic architecture of Venice that he stayed in, urging his photographer for the cover of the New York edition to go to the house that *The Aspern Papers* was based on and to get pictures of 'the Sala at Ca' Capello, without fail'.[13] In the same letter, he also asks for pictures of the Palazzo Barbaro for his work *The Wings of the Dove*, and looking at James's love for this particular house, Adeline Tinter asserts exactly what is evident also in *The Aspern Papers*: that 'he saw all of Venice as a repetition of... Palazzo Barbaro', therefore seeing Venice in its private architecture.[14] By seeing the public architecture of Venice echoed in its private spaces, the theatre of Venice expands itself. It is no longer just on the stage of the Piazza San Marco that performance is felt. From the Sala as a stage to the balconies as viewing platforms, the domestic space also becomes theatrical. Like Peter Ackroyd says, 'Venice might be described as a series of box-like stages, opening out one into another', from the public to the private.[15]

This sense of performance is crucially devoid of the domineering fear that so heavily plagues the architecture of other European cities, particularly London, as Venice is rendered simply a 'playground and pleasure haunt', according to Tinter.[16] Just as James urged his photographer to stress the importance of architecture in his works, Dickens also heavily figures architecture as a model of fear in illustrations for his books set in London. Dominic Janes makes the point that Hablot Knight Browne's dark illustrations of London's neoclassical architecture 'evoked heartless ugliness', as this was a style often associated with the wealthy elite.[17] Venice, in comparison, cannot carry such oppression. Even when describing the horrors of its past imperial power in the juxtaposing prison attached to the Doge's palace, it is made inconsequential by the ruin of the Venetian empire, appearing as a 'consoling reason for its downfall' (*PI*, p. 81). The Palace itself is always attached to the adjective 'old', and both Dickens and James use this term 'old palace' frequently between them (*PI*, p. 80) (*AP*, p. 50) to contrast Venetian grandeur with its ruin and tie them together. Because of this, every vision of architectural impostion is rendered ineffectual in both texts, and the only effect these structures administer is the inconsequential feelings of a theatre performance. Venice is apparently dislodged from the competition between Classical and Gothic architecture occurring in England with Augustus Pugin bringing in the Gothic revival.[18] Neither the Venetian Gothic Doge's Palace nor the Classical influence in Sansovino's library inspire any such fear of oppression in either text. In the absence of such fear, one is truly able 'to understand great architecture' - so John Julius Norwich supposes is the case for James, but one can easily see this as being evident for Dickens too.[19]

The theatre of Venice is constructed as such consistently through its architecture. Expanding outwards from the central stage of the Piazza San Marco, architectural echoes are heard in the private architecture with its balconies and its grand halls, and the whole of the city is reflected in these smaller structures like a fractal of urban planning. By virtue of its imperial ruin, its structures of power do not impose oppression like the architecture of London. For both James and Dickens, Venice is both a dream and a performance, with no bearing on their everyday reality. If anything, its many balconies lend it more to the comic tradition, and Venice becomes more than a set of stage boxes, but a collection of 'little houses of comedy' (*AP*, p. 143). The true comedy is found in the twist of fate that all imposing architecture must follow with ruin, becoming no more than a theatrical set design.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

[1] Henry James, 'The Aspern Papers', *The Aspern Papers and Other Tales*, ed. by Michael Gorra (London: Penguin, 2014), pp. 50-145; Charles Dickens, *Pictures from Italy*, ed. by Kate Flint (London: Penguin, 1998). Both shall hereafter be referenced with page numbers put parenthetically next to corresponding quotes in the main text, as AP and PI respectively.

[2] Iain Fenlon, *Piazza San Marco* (London: Profile, 2010), p. xxi

[3] Michael O'Neill, Mark Sandy and Sarah Wootton, eds., *Venice and the Cultural Imagination* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012), p. 1

[4] Michael Gorra, ed., *The Aspern Papers*, p. 336n

[5] Margaret Muther D'Evelyn, *Venice & Vitruvius: Reading Venice with Daniele Barbaro and Andrea Palladio* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 279

[6]Daniele Barbaro, ed., *Vitruvio: Dell'Architettura* (Venice: [no pub.], 1567), V. XII, p. 203:15, trans. by D'Evelyn, *Venice and Vitruvius*, p. 267.

[7]Charles Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, ed. by Margaret Cardwell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 297

[8] Jeremy Tambling, '*Martin Chuzzlewit*: Dickens and Architecture', *English: Journal of the English Association* 48.192 (1999), 147-168, pp. 158-163

[9]D'Evelyn, *Venice and Vitruvius*, p. 279

[10] Ibid, p.278

[11]Gorra, ed., *The Aspern Papers*, p. 334n

[12]Gorra, ed., *The Aspern Papers*, p. 334n; Giulia Foscari, *Elements of Venice* (Zurich: Lars Muller, 2014), p. 328 [13]Henry James, 'To Alvin Langdon Coburn', 6th December 1906', *Henry James: Letters* Vol. IV, ed. by Leon Edel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 426-428, p. 427

[14]Adeline R. Tiner, *The Cosmopolitan World of Henry James: An Intertextual Study* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1991), p. 263

[15]Peter Ackroyd, *Venice: Pure City* (London: Random House, 2010), p. 146

[16]Tinter, *Cosmopolitan World*, p. 261

[17]Dominic Janes , 'Gothic Visions of Classical Architecture in Hablot Knight Browne's "Dark" Illustrations for the Novels of Charles Dickens', *Gothic Studies* 16.2 (2014), 33-51, p. 47

[18]Carsten Ruhl, 'Augustus Welby Pugin', *Architectural Theory from the Renaissance to the Present* (Cologne: Taschen, 2003), pp. 454-461(p. 454)

[19]John Julius Norwich, *Paradise of Cities: Venice and its Nineteenth-Century Visitors* (New York: Viking, 2003), p. 178

Sam Collier English Literature,

Wolfsessen

G. P. CAMPBELL, Creative Writing

Once upon a time, there was a forest. In fact, there were many. They seemed to cover the whole world and, from the time that the sun set to the dawn, you could walk and walk and see no human animal, no smoke on the horizon. Once, we thought the world was limitless because we had only our feet and our wills to guide us through the uncharted haze. The stars shone their dead light coldly down on us and the earth stood still beneath our unsteady feet.

She lived with her mother by the edge of the town. From her house, she watched the treeline and it watched her back. By day, it was comic to her. The logs, all standing to attention in a neat row, custodians of an age-old boundary, peculiar soldiers. By night, the wood was stranger still. A dark tangle, untamed and untameable. She was not supposed to be in there. Her mother did not need to tell her this. She knew it.

It was day when she set off, carrying with her a cup, a knife and a hunk of tough, dark bread, but it was autumn, and the night drew in sooner than she'd hoped. The sounds around her changed with the light. Birdsong died and an older, deeper melody hung about the trees like a fog. She set her back against a trunk and brought her knees up to her chest but found she could not sleep until she dealt with the Wolf.

It watched her from a thicket, belly low to the ground and nose upturned to catch whispers of her on the breeze. "Do you mean to eat me?" she asked the darkness.

"Yes." The Wolf replied. It stood up and stretched out and showed her its beautiful teeth with a yawn.

"Such a pity. I was hoping to get to sleep."

"Is that so?" The Wolf was salivating now and drops of hot spittle steamed where they fell on the forest floor.

"Perhaps we can make a game of it?" Wolves love games and they both knew it. Its ears pricked up and she went on: "I want to sleep and you want to eat. If you try to eat me now, I'll scream, and holler, and climb a tree and I'll go tired and you'll go hungry." The Wolf looked disheartened. "But, if you let me go to sleep first, I can have my rest and you can have an easy meal."

At this, the Wolf pricked up its ears and seemed, in general, to become far more amenable.

"I will play this game with you." The Wolf met her deep brown eyes (and thought about how delicious they looked). "But know that, when you fall asleep, I will not hesitate."

She nodded and said she understood and both of them swore to play by the rules set out: To fall asleep is to be eaten. To try to eat before then is to go hungry.

And so passed an hour of the night. The Wolf, in its hunger, grew restless. "Will you not sleep, child? The moon has risen high."

"I would, Wolf. It's only that…"

"That what?"

"That babbling, twittering frog. It can't be more than a dozen paces away. Don't you hear it?"

"I do," said the Wolf, turning its head toward the rhythmic ribbit, and then it was gone. The sound was too, a few seconds later, and the Wolf returned licking its thin lips.

Some two hours passed under the swaying canopy and again the Wolf asked. "Will you not sleep, child? The stars are beginning to dim."

"I would, Wolf. If it weren't for that burrowing, tunnelling rabbit. I can feel its thumping paws through the ground where I sit. It's digging a new hole not so far away; don't you hear it?"

"I do," said the Wolf, pricking its ears and slinking off, belly dragging, in the direction of the thump, thump, thump. It was not long before he was back. A little heavier than before, he set himself opposite the girl with a burp.

It was three hours now before the Wolf asked his question again. "Will you not sleep, child? I see a light in the East".

"I would, Wolf. If it weren't for that snuffling, snoring huntsman. He must be a mile away, tucked up in his cabin, but his noise echoes through the trees like thunder. Don't you hear it?"

The Wolf did not answer at all but was gone for some time. When he returned, belly tight as a drum, the girl was asleep. He sauntered up to her, licked her hand. He was full anyway, he thought.

By the time she woke, blinking in the noon sun, the Wolf was gone.

G. P. Campbell Creative Writing,

Invisible England and the Foreign Spectacle: Representations of Englishness in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* and M.P. Shiel's *The Purple Cloud*

ALEXANDRA ROBINSON, English Literature

As the British empire expanded during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, England began encountering 'foreignness' on an unprecedented scale, heightening the necessity of defining its own identity. For Edward Said, the concurrent emergence of the novel form proved central to this: novelists 'shaped the idea of England' through depicting 'the relationship between 'home' and 'abroad", where England was 'made known' and 'abroad' had only a marginal presence.[1] England and Englishness were familiar; the foreign unknown. This process, however, is challenged through the spectacularising of foreign culture in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801) and M. P. Shiel's *The Purple Cloud* (1901), which passively constructs Englishness as a non-spectacle. These novels' passive development of Englishness conceives it as an 'aesthetic of simplicity', which Jo Carruthers defines as 'a bare minimum of form amounting to formlessness' with a complete absence of 'aesthetic spectacle', that renders it invisible.[2] Englishness is defined against the visible 'foreign'. Yet this essay will argue that this establishes a paradox: despite a 'simple aesthetic' implying 'formlessness', being defined against foreign spectacles nevertheless indicates that Englishness is also a structure, one which must *visibly* negate spectacle. This essay will consequently trace how Edgeworth's and Shiel's portrayals of Englishness is constructed while simultaneously presented as *non* constructed, which subtly enables its exclusion of non-English people.

By presenting foreign and English subjects through affirmative and negative polarity respectively, Edgeworth seemingly only explicitly constructs foreignness. In detailing the 'creole' Mr. Vincent's 'large dark eyes', 'aquiline nose', and 'sun burnt complexion', and introducing his accompanying 'black servant by the name of Juba', both characters' bodies become inherently visible; Juba's noteworthy blackness supersedes even his name.[3] As 'uncommon' features and a 'striking' manner encompass what 'appeared foreign' in Mr. Vincent (and Juba), Edgeworth's adjectives exclusively attribute this visibility to their 'foreignness', thereby spectacularising their non-English heritage. The narrative's inclusion of Juba's free indirect discourse as he 'begged so earnestly to go with young massa' reinforces this (200). His speech is not only mispronounced and grammatically incorrect, as the omitted pronoun before 'young' denotes, but also overtly deviates from the text's established fluency, consequently emphasising Juba's foreignness to distinguish him. By rendering foreignness discernible, however, Edgeworth also implicitly portrays 'Englishness' as *un*discernible, consisting of 'common' features and behaviours without visible form. Belinda's and Clarence Hervey's descriptions embody this: their physical appearances are excluded and their characters fashioned through negation. Belinda is 'free from affectation and coquetry', with negation indicating her disinclination for noticeable behaviour, and Lady Delacour uses a negated anaphora to illustrate Hervey as '*not* a man' susceptible to impropriety (10; 12). The absence of a tangible 'aesthetic spectacle' both defines them and juxtaposes the 'spectacle' of foreignness, passively defining Englishness as formless simplicity. Englishness thus operates akin to how Richard Dyer conceives whiteness as signifying an 'invisible' character, as nondescript Englishness is invisible compared to spectacularised foreignness.[4] Yet while whiteness paradoxically also 'makes white people visible as white' for Dyer, this overlap with *Belinda*'s idea of Englishness fabricates two paradoxes in Edgeworth's novel. Not only must 'invisible' Englishness be perceived as a non-spectacle to be identifiable as Englishness, but also Dyer's use of the active 'makes' demonstrates that identification also requires a constructed form: Englishness must therefore be 'made', rather than being 'formless'. Juba's skin and dialect, and Mr. Vincent's 'person and manners' thus both demarcate their non-Englishness' construction-as-negation, rendering Englishness visible as: white; fluent in the English language, and lacking sunburn, aquiline noses, and large dark eyes. Edgeworth's apparent depiction of Englishness as a formless 'aesthetic of simplicity', then, ironically enables its forms to be perceived.

Englishenss' inherent structures is uncovered by its inconsistent presence in English women, as it excludes unconventional forms of femininity. During Lady Delacour's outburst, her remark that 'strong expression of feelings' are 'foreign' to Belinda's nature extracts two implications from the adjective 'foreign': it reiterates Belinda's opposition to extravagance and characterises 'strong expression' as distinctly non-English (188). Lady Delacour's obvious propensity for 'strong expression', then, associates her with tangible foreignness; Belinda thus passively embodies a negated spectacle that is innately 'English'. Despite being English, Lady Delacour's spectacular character is too visible for Englishness. The 'hideous spectacle' of her breast reinforces the connection between spectacle and foreignness (30). As the 'spectacle' resulted from a socially subversive female duel, organised to settle Lady Delacour's feud with Harriet Freke that the former's inability to breastfeed (causing her daughter's death) ignited, Lady Delacour's breast visually metaphorises her defining resistance to English traditions. Feminine spectacle, then, is fundamentally incongruous with Englishness. Englishness' supposed 'formlessness', furthermore, conceives construction as both a spectacle and an inappropriate form of femininity for English women. Although Hervey's protégé in his 'romantic

project of educating a wife' is the English Virginia St. Pierre, her portrait is assumed to depict 'foreign beauty' when exhibited (330; 173). As Virginia's 'education' instructs her to present herself and behave in specific manners, it renders her a spectacle: her training must be observed by Hervey and the portrait's audience, otherwise it is obsolete. For James Morris, Virginia's constructed identity '[represents stereotypes of] the creole [woman]', but this misinterprets the significance of her foreignness; rather, it indicates how Hervey's construction gives her a noticeable 'form', which also subtly reiterates Englishness' naturally occurring 'formlessness'.[5] Virginia's 'beauty' is 'foreign' precisely *because* it is constructed. Both Lady Delacour and Virginia, then, signify the perceptible structure of foreignness, in spite of their English birth. Yet what their visibility also exposes is that while Englishness appears invisible, being the antithesis of foreignness, it must be a structure for two purposes: not only to negate spectacle and 'form', but also to determine who adheres to it.

Although an 'aesthetic of simplicity' is supposedly formless, *Belinda* undermines this through portraying its innate performativity. As Belinda's 'prudence...[increases] with the necessity for its exertion', Edgeworth juxtaposes 'prudence', implying 'sense', 'discretion', and lack of spectacle, with 'exertion', which implies an intended performance (131).[6] Despite prudence being a negated spectacle and thus 'invisible', Belinda is witnessed 'exerting' it, ironically performing that which *resists* performance. Prudence must have a form to be observable, thereby signifying that negated spectacles are still themselves 'forms', contradicting simplicity's 'formless' quality. The verb 'increases', moreover, heightens the paradox: to be compared with previous 'prudence' levels, the quantity of this 'invisible' characteristic must be known, thus establishing it as a form constructed by Belinda's behaviour. In cultivating a non-spectacle, Belinda passively spectacularises this, which ironically renders the negated spectacle traceable. Lady Delacour's reassimilation into Englishness also demonstrates this performative nature. As her 'hideous spectacle' is treated and disappears, she re-assumes her place in domestic society, with 'no part to act' (289). While a lack of 'part to act' suggests Lady Delacour's Englishness, embodied by her now constituting a non-spectacle, occurs naturally, the emphasis on this lack passively constructs 'Englishness': it is formed as the perceptible (natural) disinclination to be seen as formed and performed. For Sharon Smith, Lady Delacour 'constructs, revises, broadens, and moves beyond conventional representations of domesticity' by '[developing] a public identity', but this is incongruous with her rejection of a formed 'part to act'.[7] Instead, Lady Delacour's public identity passively emerges from her assimilation *into* 'conventional domesticity'; that is, her reassimilation into the natural re-establishes her 'invisibility', reinforced by how her body's spectacle is negated through treatment. To assimilate into the natural, however, is paradoxical with 'naturality': 'natural' implies a lack of construction, but there must be an existing structure for assimilation to occur. Through the performances exemplified by both Belinda's cultivated prudence and Lady Delacour's reassimilation into domesticity, Englishness' 'natural absence of spectacle' is therefore exposed as inherently structured and spectacular.

In maintaining distinctions between 'foreignness' and 'Englishness', Edgeworth's novel subtly indicates the latter's innate structure. The division is first embodied by Mr. Vincent's ultimate failure to marry Belinda and his subsequent exile to Europe, which result from a paradox of spectacle: as he '*could not help feeling*' lured to gamble by *not* wanting to make a spectacle by refusing the 'common pursuit', his participation sanctions an 'inevitable' 'ruin' that itself is also a spectacle (390). Despite his extended stay in England under Mr. Percival's tutelage, the paradox and the adjective 'inevitable' represent that Mr. Vincent will always embody 'spectacle'; unlike the English Lady Delacour, who can reject it and become invisible, Mr. Vincent's foreignness renders him unfailingly visible and unable to offset this. Kathryn Kirkpatrick argues that it is merely because Mr. Vincent's 'income is not at the disposal of the English patriarch' Mr. Percival that Belinda is 'not at [Mr. Vincent's] disposal', but the 'inevitable' spectacle furthers this: his income is not only unavailable, but unavailable *because* he is foreign and therefore cannot avoid spectacular behaviour.[8] It is his foreignness that deems him incompatible with Belinda, not just the financial impropriety. Ironically, however, this also passively defines Englishness: as Mr. Vincent's foreignness enables his 'ruin', Englishness is conceived as incompatible with ruin, which again implies an existing structure that ensures spectacle does not manifest. Despite Juba's marriage to the (white) English servant Lucy, furthermore, Edgeworth's novel denies him complete assimilation into 'Englishness'. Legally, his marriage fashions him his own place within English society, but he is nevertheless regarded as 'Juba the black' or simply the white '[Mr. Vincent's] black', with his synecdochic blackness ensuring his maintained visibility that prohibits his assumption of 'invisible' Englishness (411; 394). His marriage neither mitigates the spectacle exemplified by his skin, nor supersedes his origin as Mr. Vincent's servant, but also exposes Englishness' structure through indicating its prejudices. His visible blackness is incongruous with Englishness' invisible whiteness, leaving him stranded *between* Englishness and foreignness. Juba's incomplete assimilation and Mr. Vincent's 'ruin', then, undermine the passive 'aesthetic of simplicity' by revealing the existence of prerequisites and prejudices that construct Englishness. Consequently, Edgeworth's text fundamentally rejects the very idea of an invisible, 'formless' national identity it intends to represent.

Shiel ironically structures Englishness as naturally 'enclosed' through depicting the foreign as an abject, affective experience. Using Wordsworth's poetry as an example, Carruthers argues that 'enclosure' is 'typical of representations of [English simplicity]', but this contradicts her definition of simplicity as 'formless': the existence of boundaries confirm a structure.[9] In *The Purple Cloud*, Adam experiences the North Pole expedition as a trek 'across the Vast', signifying both the Arctic's geographical scale and the self-evident absence of manmade indicators about location.[10] In transcribing 'Vast' as a proper noun, not an adjective, though, Adam uses the terrain's unfamiliar appearance to *name* it; its lack of boundary is the only constituent element of the foreign space. As both the foreign space and experience is boundless, then, Adam's 'home', England, is passively portrayed as bounded and familiar, but paradoxically invisible compared to the visual terror of foreign vastness. The foreign is an affective experience, whereas English and Englishness

comprises no experience at all. Adam's attitude upon returning to England, furthermore, reinforces the idea of the foreign as terrifying. As he 'could not believe [he] was in England, for all were dark-skinned people', and becomes 'tired of' an asyndetic list of nationalities and races, who are identifiably foreign through their appearance and 'nightmare of wild poses, colours, stuffs and garbs', Adam's 'nightmare' is not that these people are dead, but that they are *foreign* (75; 81). For Adam, their presence is an invasion, yet their encroachment being represented through 'dark skin' or other foreign features heightens the significance that 'English' is omitted from the list of people he sees: they are not only textually invisible, but *physically* invisible to him, as they are inherently 'normal' and only noteworthy if they died in an unusual position, like the 'English boy' 'over-looking' masses of dead foreigners (75). His fear is thus ignited by foreign transgression of English national boundaries. Despite acknowledging the novel's Anglocentrism, Maria Fumagalli associates this with the global apocalypse resulting from 'decisions taken in London and perpetrated by Londoners', yet Adam's xenophobia extends this by implicitly reflecting an idealised 'English' enclosure that is constructed against the foreign-at-large.[11] Englishness, then, is the supposedly simple, 'natural' opposite to the 'dark' and 'colourful' foreign which encompasses everything else, but the paradox remains: to present this 'enclosure' ultimately requires Englishness to have structure too.

Although Adam's extravagant, post-apocalyptic behaviours seemingly reject 'Englishness', they warrant Englishness' reassertion of itself as, paradoxically, both 'simple' and 'formed'. After adapting to post-apocalyptic reality, Adam's spatial and temporal boundaries dissolve: the text compresses 'Calcutta, Pekin and San Francisco' into one sentence, with 'Paris' in the preceding paragraph, with no indication of time spent travelling between continents (152). The 'Vast' expanse of foreign land becomes insignificant as Adam is increasingly separated from England, both geographically and in terms of time elapsed since he was there. In freely transgressing national borders, he demonstrates the very behaviour of those escaping the purple cloud that evoked fear in Englishness' 'enclosed' ideology, which both characterises Adam as 'foreign' in his rejection of English 'simplicity', and reinforces that such attitudes nevertheless constitute a structure. His decadent assumption of Oriental identity, moreover, both embodies his surface rejection of Englishness and exposes its sustained influence on his consciousness. For William Svitavsky, Adam's 'tendency towards Orientalism' signifies 'a personal regression to primitivism [and] a dramatic adoption of Eastern style and identity', but as Adam describes Orientalism as 'taking full possession' of him, he willingly accepts being 'no longer a Western, 'modern' mind, but a primitive and Eastern one', thereby reflecting a conscious *rejection* of modernity (125).[12] It is not as passive as 'regression' implies, but simply Adam's choice not to contest the changes that occur. The apparent shift, however, is not just psychological. By remarking how his 'ankles', 'fingers', and 'wrists' are 'heavy with gold and silver ornaments', Adam turns Oriental dress into a twofold spectacle: it is tangible in both its striking colours and physical weight, which combine to symbolise his 'Eastern mind' (126). Yet this ironically undermines his assertion of being 'Eastern': in deeming the dress noteworthy, Adam implicitly compares it to the unremarkable elements of Western (English) modernity he is accustomed to, which both passively constructs English culture as invisible and non-spectacular and represents that he cannot avoid Englishness' propensity for judgement. His supposed rejection of Englishness ultimately discloses that he *cannot* do this; Englishness, therefore, may be invisible, but it is nevertheless portrayed as pervasive and fundamental to its subjects' subjectivities.

Adam's treatment of Leda simultaneously reiterates the connection between foreignness and spectacle and undercuts the consequent assumption that Englishness, being a negated spectacle, is formless. By stating that Leda becomes 'completely adapted' 'to this or that' and 'wears her outfit [coquettishly]', Adam spectacularises even the minutiae of Leda's behaviour (197). As the adverb 'coquettishly' implies Leda's dress is an act of 'flirtatious behaviour', even covering her body demonstrates sensuality; for Adam, Leda's self-presentation can only be to evoke a reaction from him.[13] The verb 'adapted', furthermore, implies Adam has established and does 'this or that' as well, but only Leda is visible doing so: no matter what she does, it is inherently a spectacle, while the English Adam doing likewise *never* is. Despite Leda being native to the Middle East and Adam being the settler, his control of the customs renders her the foreign subject who must display her conformance. Svitavsky's claim that Adam '[subsumes] the Other' through his relationship with Leda, then, is irreconcilable with this dynamic: Leda's innate, foreign visibility upholds a fundamental dichotomy between her and Adam.[14] Both her body and language reinforce the distinction, but also passively subvert Adam's invisibility. By describing her body as 'piebald', Adam strands Leda between 'whiteness' and 'brownness', which renders both qualities equally visible (206). His implicated 'whiteness', an invisible sign of his Englishness, is thus no longer invisible; as Leda's spectacular skin, which marks her foreignness, is partly white, whiteness' invisibility is undermined. What previously passively represented his English heritage now explicitly signifies it. His contradiction that she speaks English with 'perfect correctness (except that she does not pronounce the letter 'r')' not only emphasises her defect, but also insinuates that he compares her to his pronunciation (212). Her foreignness is thereby evident through its visual and aural difference, but this nevertheless indicates that Englishness must itself be a structure that foreignness differs *from*. Adam's Englishness is supposedly a negated spectacle, but his visible demonstration of Englishness' 'simple' elements, which intend to conceive Englishness as formless, paradoxically uncovers its inherent structure.

The Purple Cloud's denouement depicts the strong reappearance of 'English' characteristics once Adam returns to his native country, ultimately representing its innate structure which resists 'foreignness'. After compressing the planet's spatial and temporal scales while in exile, even France now appears distant for him: by remarking 'I could not yet see the coast of France', the adverb 'yet' reflects his journey requires more time than he has patience for (256). The English Channel, much like the Arctic, becomes indescribably vast and unconquerable, resulting in his failure to reach France and ending his assumed dominion over international travel. The foreign is thus re-established as remote, reasserting the initial boundaries

that separate England. Despite only overtly characterising the 'foreign' as alarmingly strange, then, Shiel's novel paradoxically both passively constructs Englishness as simple and unremarkable and reflects how underlying attitudes uphold this, thereby indicating that Englishness is innately structured. These underlying ideas ultimately pervade Adam's conception of the new race once he decides to repopulate Earth with Leda. He does not merely accept Leda's influence; rather, he '[looks] for', or actively desires, 'a race that shall resemble its Mother [...] all-human, ambidextrous, ambicephalous, two-eyed – like her', and 'shall not care' if 'like her, they talk the English language with all the *r*'s turned into *l*'s' (260-261). As the portmanteau 'ambicephalous', implying a pigmented skin, and mispronounced English are traits that spectacularise Leda's foreignness, however, Adam not only restates Leda's visibility, but concurrently ensures he is invisible: this visible new race is noteworthy *because* it differs from him. The anaphora of 'like her' and complete omission of 'Father', then, formally reiterate this insistence, which contrasts Fumagalli's conclusion that Shiel's novel depicts modernity unfolding from 'embracing difference without turning it into Otherness'.[15] Although Adam does 'embrace' difference by '[looking] for' resemblance to Leda, his listing of defining characteristics still reflects that he does not possess them, consequently indicating that he conceives them as decidedly Other. In emphasising the differences that construct the new race, though, Adam implicitly presents Englishness as a structure too: while it is invisible, it is also enclosed and lacks Leda's spectacular traits, and therefore the antithesis of the striking, new population.

Despite being published a century apart, Edgeworth's and Shiel's novels both portray an essential paradox in their depictions of Englishness: although it is conceived as a natural simplicity which lacks a form, their constructions of foreignness as spectacles expose that Englishness must also be a structure, just one that *negates* spectacle. For Edgeworth, Englishness allows or denies assimilation to English society, whereas in Shiel's text, Englishness is the pervasive attitude that both elicits Adam's decadence and establishes his unique position when he ultimately returns to 'Western-ness' (213). Their decision to focus on the foreign to present Englishness, though, warrants further questioning, particularly regarding the potential influence of the authors' heritages as colonial subjects: to what extent may their insistence on Englishness' pervasive invisibility reflect its reception in nineteenth-century Ireland and the West Indies respectively, and is it so pervasive for English authors depicting Englishness? What Englishness is, then, may ultimately depend on whether one is 'English' or 'Other'.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

[1] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* [1993] (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 85.
[2] Jo Carruthers, 'The Aesthetics of Simplicity' in *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Religion*, ed. by Mark Knight (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 156-166 (p. 158).
[3] Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda* [1801] (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2020), pp. 198-200. Further references cited within the text.
[4] Richard Dyer, *White*, 2nd edn. (Oxon: Routledge, 2017), p. 45.
[5] James M. Morris, 'Transferential Rhetoric and Beyond: The West Indian Presence in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* and Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray*', in *Intersections of Gender, Class, and Race in the Long Nineteenth Century and Beyond*, ed. by Barbara Leonardi (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 165-189 (p. 171).
[6] *OED*, 'prudence' (Oxford: OUP, 2022) <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/153584?redirectedFrom=prudenceeid> [accessed 08/05/2023].
[7] Sharon Smith, 'Juba's "Black Face" / Lady Delacour's "Mask": Plotting Domesticity in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda*', *The Eighteenth Century*, 54:1 (2013), pp. 71-90 (p. 84).
[8] Kathryn J. Kirkpatrick, ' '"Gentlemen Have Horrors Upon This Subject": West Indian Suitors in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda*', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 5:4 (1994), pp. 331-348 (p. 347).
[9] Carruthers, p. 162.
[10] M.P. Shiel, *The Purple Cloud* [1901] (London: Penguin, 2012), p. 36. Further references cited within the text.
[11] Maria C. Fumagalli, *Caribbean Perspectives on Modernity: Returning Medusa's Gaze* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), p. 38.
[12] William L. Svitavsky, 'From Decadence to Racial Antagonism: M.P. Shiel at the Turn of the Century', *Science Fiction Studies*, 31:1 (2004), pp. 1-24 (p. 18).
[13] *OED*, 'coquetry'.
[14] Svitavsky, p. 21.
[15] Fumagalli, p. 52.

Alexandra Robinson English Literature,

Doll Parts

LORETTA GUPTA, Creative Writing

Content Warning for themes of sexual violence, suicide and miscarriage.

The first time it happens, she doesn't say no. She doesn't say much of anything. Face pressed into the pillow, as he peels the skin off her back, in a perfect square. Weeping silently after, lay on her stomach, so as to avoid staining the white sheets. She doesn't want to answer any questions. The next day, she winces as she buttons up her uniform shirt. She catches the grimace in the mirror and mentally scolds herself. She is not going to wince again.

The second time it happens, she runs, hides in a corner. But it is much too easy to get trapped in a corner. When running doesn't work, she says that she'll tell her parents. They'll be home soon. He laughs. Bares his teeth. Sharp. ('*We both know that isn't true.*') (*And he is right, she won't say a thing.*). This time, she has to be held down. This time, he puts those teeth to use, and when the skin comes off, so does the flesh. One canine sinks deep, opening a gaping wound. She sees his shadow grow against the wall, sees him looming over her in silhouette. When he leaves, she cannot stop the dripping down her back, bleeding onto her sheets. When her mother wakes her up in the morning, she tells her that blood is a natural part of being a woman. At 10 years old, she did not consider herself a woman. It doesn't occur to her that she's misunderstood anything. It doesn't occur to her that her mother could be wrong.

She grows up, and her mother is not wrong.

She grows up, and that particular man is gone, but she has become accustomed to the cruelty of men. Her back has become a chessboard, healed over at varying degrees. She still doesn't say no. She wakes up in the bedroom of a man with a wife; her therapist; an old high school teacher; a stranger at a bar. She lets the tap run so she won't wake them up when she dry heaves over the toilet, she spits out bile (*again and again and again*) and realises that all that's left inside her.

She has long since come to the realisation that these men are not attracted to her. That when they lie her down and peel away and do not kiss her, she is just easy prey. A girl who won't say no and a girl who won't tell. Unmoving and quiet: the perfect woman.

Her back doesn't bleed anymore, but her skin is closing over empty crevices. She is hollowing out. Her mother congratulates her on the weight loss.

Sometimes a man will kiss along the seams of her patchwork back, and she will call it falling in love. Until he rips his own piece free, grunting mechanically, and one more wound is added to the mosaic. And one more scream dies in her throat.

Her hair has started to fall out, so she sews new hair into her scalp, shiny and plastic and long. The sewing needle lobotomises her. She does not notice.

The next man she meets finds nothing to take on her back. He repositions her and takes her joints. She rolls clay into six little balls, to drop into her hips, wrists and knees. She lays limp now, limbs flailed outwards. She cannot even have agency over the way she moves; she hooks fishing wire into her flesh and stretches it taut, assigns new meaning to the phrase 'pull yourself together'.

She allows herself fantasies sometimes, in the early hours of the morning, reaching up; hands wrapping around the prickly expanse of their throats. She dreams of them immobile, harmless above her. Filing down the monsters' claws, muzzling them. The dreams are just that: incomplete, unattainable. And even then, the men drop down and crush her.

The next time – he violates the confines of her ribcage, as the man pulls bone apart, takes her lungs. It's okay: breathing and living have not been synonymous in a long time. Organ after organ is taken, a discordant screeching in the back of her head, a head with holes in it, give him head, give him holes, aching wounds, open doors, armed robbery, her body is a tree, shake and the fruit will fall. Fuck her hard enough and take the food and consume and consume and let her waste away, eat the sweet, red seeds and discard the bitter pith on the wooden floor. The same wooden floor that used to bruise her knees sickly green and mottled violet. She has since undergone a petrification of sorts: turned brittle and colourless, vitrified in the heat of something fever hot. Something that her psychiatrist calls 'flashbacks'. (*On the bright side, her skin has never been clearer.*)

She stumbles home one night on collapsing legs. Years of silence have done her no favours, the threat of her voice is enough: this man pulls her tongue from her mouth, writhing between his two fingers. The next night, he comes back for seconds, reaching down to rip her larynx out. She vomits out blood, tries to apologise for making a mess; she can't get the words out. When he leaves, she cleans the floor with bleach, pours some on her hands, scrubs and polishes the porcelain. Her skin does not blister or burn, only shines pearly white. It still feels *filthy*. When she tries to slit her wrists, the blade bounces uselessly off her arm.

Next are the teeth: each of the thirty-two wrenched from pink gums by broad hands. One by one. It's okay, she hasn't been opening her mouth to smile. One more hollow space in her body to be filled. Relentlessly. Brutally.

She makes the mistake of crying one night, tries to cover it up with her hands. But her cheeks are wet and her hands slide down. It's his move now, retaliation, and he peels her eyelids back, plunges his fingers into her eye sockets. Her eyes roll out of his hand and he grinds them beneath his shoe like the stubs of a cigarette. She fashions herself new eyes, empty glass spheres that she pushes in. They sit unwieldy, slightly too-large, too-round in her face. When she blinks, they protrude from behind her eyelids, stretching against the membrane. Trying to break free. To shatter to the ground and be liberated. She holds them in captivity with her.

She's stuck on a shelf now, legs out, hands in her lap. She stares vacantly through glass eyes that do not blink anymore. Waiting to be picked up,

thrown around and played with by reckless boys and cold men. She dreams of a woman that finds her. One that will brush the knots out of her plastic hair, close her eyelids and place her out of reach. Put her to rest. What sweet mercy it would be, collecting dust.

She does not notice the little china girl growing like a tumour in the cavern of her torso, doll stacked inside doll. When she finds out, her body shakes, and the little one rattles around in her belly. She knows what awaits the child. She knows her own destiny; she knows that the baby doll will inherit it, inherit that birthright of violence.

One man picks her off the shelf and throws her to the ground when he's done with her; porcelain shatters against porcelain inside her body, and she does not have to worry about her child inheriting anything anymore. The shards fall to the bottom, settling in her pelvic floor. For the first time in a long time, she weeps. Water flows out from under her glass eyes, torrential downpour. Somehow, she screams, screams bloody murder, spit hits the floor and burns through the lacquer. She drags herself, legs behind her, across the ground. She pounds her fists against the wall in rage and frustration and hideous grief. When she pulls them away, her hands are bruised and bloody. How tragic, to only be human again through that loss.

Loretta Gupta Creative Writing,

Decadent Modernism and Sexuality in Richard Bruce Nugent and Djuna Barnes

LUKE BRYAN, English Literature

The decadent movement within nineteenth-century Europe, as Vincent Sherry defines it, is predicated on the period's 'ongoing failure of European revolution' resulting in an 'ongoing conversation of loss' inextricable from its culture.[1] This 'conversation' was not beholden to this specific period, though, as it expanded into the era of American modernism displayed by both Richard Bruce Nugent's 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade' (1926) and Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood* (1936). Within their version of decadence, these texts transpose the failure of political revolution to sexual revolution, allowing both writers to respond to the modernist breaking from literary tradition as queer writers themselves. By beginning with their individual constructions of decadent figures, Nugent and Barnes can both channel the past to speak to their individual present circumstances outside of the dominant cultural moment to articulate its differences. Nugent's queer dandy, as embracing his irresolution, can harness decadent form and modernist content to eschew the need to engage in normative sexual relations and enact his preferred sexuality. Barnes' queer underworld, though, upturns decadent forms through emptying it of sexual desire, which leaves these forms to undertake a regression into a lower manner of being without the possibility of a sexual, procreative futurity.

Resistance to authority in 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade' is reflected through how Nugent's decadent black dandy resists the dominant idea of the 'New Negro' of modernity that Alain Locke had constructed a year prior. Locke's concept contends that black pride will be made through a realisation that black ideals are 'none other than the ideals of American institutions and democracy', which constructs the modern black figure as coming into being through 'the responsibilities of social contribution' to a mainstream American ideal.[2] Elisa Glick's articulates how the black dandy directly responds to this black idea of 'contribution', as they embody a 'refusal to be bought and sold' as either 'fetishised black body' or 'wage labor', .which animates Alex's construction of his dandyism as against societal contribution.[3] Alain's figure is presented in 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade' immediately as Alex's brother, who is a breadwinner that is 'three years younger' yet 'on the stage . . . making thirty-five dollars a week', whereas Alex idly '[wonders] why he couldn't find work', as he used to when 'he had only been fourteen'.[4] The connection of youth and capitalistic prowess signifies an ability to assimilate into the wider 'white' America as Locke's New Negro does, but as this money is made through being 'on the stage', the possibility of New York's racism infects this capitalistic process through the necessity of becoming the exhibited and 'fetishised black body' for white spectators. When Alex becomes 'contented' through the self-fashioning process of becoming 'idle', then, he manoeuvres the profit-directed system towards the ideology of the decadents, which embraces resistance against societal normativity (SLJ, 34).

In repudiating the normative life of capital accumulation, Nugent's protagonist diverts his life towards the pleasure of objects to articulate a queer sexuality, which is displayed by his cigarette holder that features inlaid jewels. Its ability to light cigarettes is valorised by Alex, as he hopes to quote a decadent forerunner when he asks 'was it Wilde who had said . . . a cigarette is the most perfect pleasure because it leaves one unsatisfied' (SLJ, 35). Nugent here focuses on the modernist technique of intertextuality through the construction of an arch-dandy that channels the words of other decadent artists. However, if the lighting of the cigarette is a Wildean action of remaining unsatisfied, its burning out conscribes a finality preventing it from being Alex's 'perfect pleasure', meaning that his artistic influence must be distinct from other decadents' ideas. His dream therefore reflects that the holder, not the cigarette, leads him to his revery. As he is 'suddenly [. . .] [standing] erect . . . exhultant [sic] . . . and in his hand he held . . . an ivory holder . . . inlaid with red jade . . . and green' at the end of the dream, as well as the paragraph, the reveal of the 'ivory holder' acts as the dream's climax (SLJ, 37). Instead of the lovers' entrance into the dream, the sudden appearance of the holder causes him to stand 'erect', with the double entendre directing the dream towards the erotic dimension, as this object's penetration by 'inlaid' jewels leads to the dream, the paragraph, and Alex (sexually) all finishing at the same time. Rather than the pleasures of the body coming from his other lovers that are within this dream, erotic fulfilment is diverted into the object that holds mere promise of fulfilment of the lit cigarette, which cannot be literally fulfilled in the dream's premature conclusion. If this dream is inspiration incarnate, though, Nugent's dandy reverses societal needs of productivity in investing his personhood into the most ephemeral object of sexual and artistic gratification for its own sake.

Rather than a decadent intertextuality consciously called upon to establish a place within the tradition, Nugent's text instead calls upon previous extracts both within and outside of 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade' to separate Alex's lived experience and the alternative fusion of sexual, aesthetic appreciation that occurs near the text's conclusion. Throughout the parties following his dream, Alex is unable to lose his experience of the dream's 'red calla lilies', with the phrase's repetition displaying their haunting effect on him to such an extent that they disrupt the narrative (SLJ, 38). This recurrence later in the text implies that his need to engage in this aesthetic appreciation leads to an unbounded temporality, meaning that he does not commit to living inside of the dream or outside of it. The difference in his focus on the jade holder from the dream's necessary

narrative conclusion, where he finds a locus of inspiration artistically and sexually, and this waking rumination on the previously insignificant 'red calla lilies', however, signals Alex's difference with other decadents. Cody St. Clair formulates this difference as Alex's 'artistic production [being] not necessary for realizing the telos of flânerie, as his sensuous experience of the image's ephemerality and loss is pleasurable in itself'.[5] Rather than seeking this concrete inspiration again, the position of Nugent's narrative within FIRE!! becomes paramount to Alex's ephemeral enjoyment of his lover, as he is textually embedded within the earlier Foreword. Rather than a commitment solely to previous European decadence, Alex also embodies his ellipses' modernist free indirect discourse and its doubleness when his consciousness infiltrates the Foreword with his question embedded in the definition of fire, 'the soul an inward flush of fire. . . . Beauty? . . . flesh on fire'.[6] Within Beauty's bounding by the ruminations of fire, the text takes a sexual dimension, with Beauty's introduction of the text transforming the doubled possibility of the soul's 'flush of fire' into 'flesh' instead, embedding a textually queer consummation into Nugent's sexual politics. Nugent's dandy therefore does not reinvent merely himself throughout the text, but also his lovers to ensure their ephemerality corresponds with his pleasurable cigarette holder's.

Nugent's dandy, through the ability to configure his sexual life as just as innately ephemeral as his artistic inspiration, circumvents the danger of the decadent movement's end to exist within his modernist moment through abandoning his resistant narrative to ultimately have both lovers at once. While St. Clair asserts that the destabilising influence of the ellipses crosses into the proposed novel's uncertain conclusion of Alex's indecision between Beauty and Melva that is never resolved, the ellipses in this section seem to be unique in their function. Rather than confusing boundaries of temporality and spatiality to ensure Alex's sexuality to be unable to be wholly ascertained, here the lovers are doubled into a composite figure to permit his indecision between them. With the initial spell concocted by the ellipses between 'Beauty . . . Melva . . . Beauty . . . Melva', their distance from each other is shortened until they exist as shades of each other, barely differing in their function as the one decadent lover (SLJ, 39). When Melva kisses him, 'the street had been blue', which is a repetition from Alex and Beauty's first meeting, yet the refrain of 'one can love two at the same time' means that she is not replaced by Beauty at this point (39). Rather, Alex's indecision of lover and doubled sexual orientation is embedded within their bodily indeterminacy for the purpose of his indeterminate aesthetic appreciation, meaning that the blueness of the street while walking with Melva places both of them with him without differentiation, placing them both as sexual secrets that defies the sexual normative in a decadent self-fashioning. However, the decadent end is elided by Nugent through his positioning of this text as 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade, A Novel, Part I', with the rest of the novel never being published. With the inconclusiveness of the '. . .To Be Continued. . .' at its end, the novel fragment removes Nugent's need to finally commit to a lover or a time period, meaning that Nugent's dandy can continue as the inter-positional decadent-modernist bisexual, loving both his symbolic and incomplete lovers indefinitely as a resistive strategy (SLJ, 39).

Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood*, in its form as a completed novel, cannot suspend its action to preserve decadence at its heights, necessitating that the decadent figure must undergo their inevitable transformation. Robin seemingly functions as the novel's flâneur, but rather than her pursuit of experience constructing the novel's narrative, it is instead her constant absence that animates the narrative, with Brian Glavey analysing the efforts of characters to explain her as 'attempting to fill with an endless profusion of words the void left by a black hole of images'.[7] Nora, in having 'sought Robin in Marseilles, in Tangier, in Naples, to understand her' and to 'love what she has loved', seems to do just that in these ventures of flânerie that escape description, being as absent as the interiority that describes what Robin 'has loved', which is never truly clarified.[8] However, Glavey's view of Robin as the only image of *Nightwood* does not capture the totality of Robin as the decadent absence, which becomes clear in the description of how within 'Nora's heart lay the fossil of Robin, intaglio of her identity, and about it for its maintenance ran Nora's blood' (NW, 51). The metaphoric figuration of Robin as 'intaglio' within Nora's heart connotes an inscription onto it that draws the blood, leading to the 'maintenance' of Robin, which is suggestive of the sense in which the rest of *Nightwood* attempts to make up for the absence of the decadent figure that the novel centres its style around. The absence of sexuality must also be viewed in this image that gets closest to sexual consummation in the penetration of Nora's heart, but all that is animated is the 'fossil' of Robin, displaying how neither women can find pleasure in the heartbreak of Robin's absence. The mutual sexual act is therefore bound up in the problem of the absent decadent figure, meaning the erosion of the decadent sexual pleasure from alternative sexual modes.

Without sex, Barnes' decadence becomes inalienably corruptive of modernism and its euphemistic sexual representation, resulting in the erasure of the impossible lesbian child. Joanne Winning's work on 'the lesbian modernist art object' claims that it could 'become a repository for desire and intimacy which cannot otherwise be openly expressed', which alters the signifier of sexuality to conceal what is truly signified, which is in this case monogamous desire. *Nightwood*'s modernist and lesbian relationships therefore substitute the child for the doll, but "when a woman gives it to a woman, it's the life they cannot have", which is portrayed by Robin's gift of the doll both to Nora and Jenny, her next lover (NW, 128). While Robin gives the doll to these two women, who she enjoys temporary domestic relationships with, the child that she has with Felix instructs her reproduction of emptiness, which the doll ultimately embodies. In their sexual communion, she produces a baby described as '[i]t [having] slept too much in a quivering palsy of nerves, it made few voluntary movements; it whimpered', with the depersonalising 'it' pronoun, as well as the baby's lack of movement in sleeping too much and not moving, suggesting Robin's production more of a doll than a human (NW, 43). This child, although he does not die, is the precursor to Nora's explanation that '[w]e give death to a child when we give it a doll', as the scene where Robin '[holds] the child high in her hand as if she were about to dash it down' yet doesn't is paralleled in her destruction of Nora's doll, figuratively giving

death to him and the sexuality needed to have created him (NW, 128, 133). When Robin finally commits to having 'picked up the doll and hurled it to the floor' to '[kick] it', the sexual expectation of the present motherly figure is perverted into the absent destroyer of what it represents, the lesbian modernist 'desire and intimacy', while the result of normative sex is preserved, despite his lack of place in the decadent world of *Nightwood*.

Barnes' reparative response in favour of non-normative sexuality does exist within *Nightwood* in the form of Doctor O'Connor's vested interest in the invert, which allows him to embody both male and female identities at once. As the novel's form of decadent dandy, O'Connor's self-expression against sexual hierarchies revolves around this equalising sexual hybridity. Tim Clarke's theory of the novel's 'morbid vitalism', where death animates 'particularized experiences' that cannot be shared by others, is extended to eros in his further statement that it occurs as an 'embodiment of affect in the flesh', which must therefore mark sexual experience as idiosyncratic and unable to be understood by others.[9] O'Connor's attempts to prescribe Robin's similar condition in actuality resembles his own much more closely, as his mixed gender metaphors that fix him neither as man nor woman correspond more closely with his assertion of what is "the pretty lad who is a girl, what but the prince-princess in point lace - neither one and half the other" (NW, 123). While Robin at points in the narrative is described as seeming like a boy, the Doctor embodies a hybridised male-female role that is inherently contradictory to normative sexual expression, meaning that his sentence's syntax is necessarily confused. In this sentence, his constructions of these roles shifts between 'the lad who is a girl' categorically and a hybridised figure of both boyishness and girlishness all at once, which suggests a fluidity in how inversion presents itself and consequently destabilises sexual roles. The image of the 'prince-princess' further complicates these conceptions, though, as both roles of the prince and princess signals the heterosexual norm of sexual hierarchy through the prince's rescue of the princess, which the Doctor destroys through positing the ability for the transformation of one into the other and back again. Through the Doctor's chosen embodiment of the invert, he attempts to preserve the sexual within the novel through the conscious choice of rejecting societal norms, which forecloses him as sexually fulfilled through being both man and woman.

The erasure of the normative sexual positions leads to the height of decadence in *Nightwood*'s last pages that affirms sex's societal necessity, as desire degenerates into the animalistic. In *Nightwood*'s infamous final scene, Robin and Nora's dog engage in what Clarke describes as 'a (possibly sexual) act of communion', which suggests not exploitation but rather a degeneration from the human level onto that of the subservient animal. Robin's sexual act occurs last of all, despite previously resonating particularly through other characters' disappearances from the narrative due to their sexual needs. Felix's disappearance upon meeting an authentic aristocrat and being unable to 'keep his eyes away' becomes a metaphoric debasement into him 'as an animal [...] turning its head from a human, as if in mortal shame' (NW, 110-111). O'Connor's final branding of himself is as a 'fiddler's bitch', placing himself in the role of the submissive female dog (NW, 149). Jenny Petherbridge is unable to help assuming her animal needs, firstly to innocently play by '[snatching] the candle from its spike' and '[blowing] it out', before her sexuality emerges to make it disappear as an object within the narrative before she 'relit it and set it back' (NW, 150-151). Within these examples, a taboo line is crossed in how each character assumes a sense of animality and sexuality together in their loss of inhibition and need to act upon the wants of another individual, all attributes that attend to Robin's final fall from consciously absent decadent to committing the unspeakable act that ends the novel. However, where these imitative falls into animality merely occur in the successive inability to function within their given society, Robin's actions lead to an sudden curtailing of the novel at its level of form. Thomas Heise's argument that *Nightwood* is founded on the 'principle of erotic submission and debasement' when Robin is 'going down' depicts a reaction against societal codes for her own gratification, but the dog's concluding actions of the novel, where 'his head' ends up 'flat upon her knees' to suggest an alternative beginning of intercourse, does not indicate that this is a moment of controlled gratification.[10] Rather, the decadent fall has been completed, as Robin's debasement of herself is not a self-fashioning, but a capitulation to unmoderated animal desire.

In conclusion, Richard Bruce Nugent's and Djuna Barnes' appropriations of decadent aesthetic in service of questioning sexual normativity could not differ more from each other. Nugent's 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade' articulates a distinctly makeshift aesthetic to articulate a novel mode of love for love's sake, as conformity to the ideal of the New Negro is abandoned at the form of the novel fragment, permitting his dandy to engage in an affirmatory queer love outside of societal restriction. Barnes' *Nightwood*, as trapped within the modernist apprehensions of decadent degeneration, succumbs to the premature societal death of the flaneur despite her centrality, meaning that positions of reclamation are lost in necessitating the completion of the descent into animalistic debasement. While both Nugent's and Barnes' decadents aim to liberate conceptions of sexuality, both decadents are figured as a form of absence: Nugent's Alex is able to accomplish this through the insularity of his narrative and lack of other subjective frameworks, whereas when these alternative frameworks are re-established, wider societal pressures cause the reimposition of the sexually normative through the inability of the different to sustain itself.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

[1] Vincent Sherry, *Modernism and the Reinvention of Decadence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 40.
[2] Alain Locke, 'The New Negro', in *I Am Because We Are: Readings in Africana Philosophy*, eds. Fred Lee Hord, Mzee Lasana Okpara, and Jonathan Scott Lee (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016) [1925], pp. 366-367.
[3] Elisa F. Glick, 'Harlem's Queer Dandy: African-American Modernism and the Artifice of Blackness', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 49:3 (Fall 2003), p. 420.
[4] Richard Bruce Nugent, 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade, A Novel, Part I', in *FIRE!! Devoted to Younger Negro Artists*, ed. Wallace Thurman

(Metuchen, New Jersey: FIRE!! Press, 1982) [1926], p. 34. Further references given in parentheses after quotations.
[5] Cody C. St. Clair, 'A Dilettante Unto Death: Richard Bruce Nugent's Dilettante Aesthetic and Unambitious Failure', *African American Review*, 50:3 (Autumn 2017), p. 282.
[6] 'Foreword', in *FIRE!! Devoted to Younger Negro Artists*, ed. Wallace Thurman (Metuchen, New Jersey: FIRE!! Press, 1982) [1926], p. 1.
[7] Brian Glavey, 'Dazzling Estrangement: Modernism, Queer Ekphrasis, and the Spatial Form of *Nightwood*', *PMLA*, 124:3 (May 2009), p. 757.
[8] Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007) [1936], p. 141. Further references given in parentheses after quotations.
[9] Tim Clarke, 'Morbid Vitalism: Death, Decadence, and Spinozism in Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood*', *Twentieth-Century Literature*, 67:2 (June 2021), pp. 177-178.
[10] Thomas Heise, 'Degenerate Sex and the City: Djuna Barnes's Urban Underworld', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 55:3 (Autumn 2009), p. 314.

Luke Bryan English Literature,

Silence Has Won

IZABELLAH EVANS, Creative Writing

He used to look at her with fire in his eyes.

Now there is nothing but slate grey walls. Shallow mirrors reflecting back at her. She imagined his insides pushed up against his skin; a grey gap expanding inside his body. An empty shell.

He lit the tip of his cigarette and sucked it in with his boyish face. The smoke twisted from his mouth and curled up into the blackened sky.

'I don't know what to say', he said.

A dead mist froze over his eyes as he watched the smoke dance into nothingness.

They both stood. Broken humans.

He leaned on the pine summerhouse that stood at the back of the overgrown garden. His hands were scabbing and the fresh red on his knuckles glistened in the half-light.

She looked down at her muddy trainers and traced the swirls of her laces. She felt a familiar sense of relief that she didn't have loops in her mind.

The boy had loops in his mind.

She liked to picture them. An endlessly flowing river of laces, a mocking current of thoughts that twisted their way around his head. No start and no end.

She imagined the torture of it. He felt the torture of it.

She looked at him with wide, glassy eyes. Vines of love and concern and fear grew around her pearly skin. She tasted the remnants of cheap white wine that twirled around her lips and glanced at the red smudge of dark lipstick stained within the strands of her gold hair.

The bony hands of Silence hung beside them. Its body loomed over their insignificant human forms.

It had won.

She sat on the steps and looked at the spots on her white trousers where black tears had dripped from her eyes. Whenever she moved, the dried salt on her face pulled against her skin and the splits within her throat widened like mud cracks on a desert floor.

Moments ago, the sounds of their splintered words darted from their mouths like red spears. The smoke from the fire that burned within their stomachs stung their eyes and blinded them. It was impossible, in this moment of war, for them to see anyone else, other than themselves, as right.

The boy looked down at her then. Her delicate frame and thin arms, clutched around her stomach, reminded him of the little porcelain doll that his mother kept on the fireplace in their first house. He thought about how he used to look at that doll. How easy it would be to smash. How satisfying. His insides burnt.

He tried to break the loop.

The hatred that stirred within the emptiness of his chest began to dissolve back into his blood and he sat next to her, flicking the ash of the cigarette onto the floor beside him.

They sat in a peaceful nothingness. The darkness swallowing them. The boy imagined his body melting into the shadows and dissolving into the earth. There was a strange sense of comfort within the stillness of their souls.

The girl leant her head on his shoulder and thought about the summer they met. How different everything had been. How different they had been. She remembered how he would sketch pictures of her, how a smile would creep up his face when she ran to him, how they would dance and play in the kitchen after school. She thought about how she would cry when she felt trapped underneath the sky, and how he would hold her. She thought about his bloody fists punching the walls, or the fence, in fits of rage. A longing sadness spread through her. She wasn't afraid of him.

'It was an accident.', he said,

'Yes', she replied. '…but he's still dead.'.

Her body felt like it was made of glass, but her words were strong.

His hands shook as he drew from his cigarette, 'Why did you make me go out? I told you I didn't feel right.'

'You didn't have to hit him.'

He stared at her unblinking, 'It's your fault.'

Izabellah Evans Creative Writing,