EXCLAMAT!ON:
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MONSTERS, MONSTROSITIES & THE (IN)HUMANITIES

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An Interdisciplinary Journal

MONSTERS, MONSTROSITY, AND THE (IN)HUMANITIES

EDITORIAL BOARD

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EDITORIAL

Volume 5 of *Exclamation: An Interdisciplinary Journal* is the second to be produced during a global pandemic. As ever, the theme of this volume – 'Monsters, Monstrosities, and the (In)Humanities – is especially apposite, as there have emerged both inspiring stories of compassionate humanity, and individual actions that reveal a monstrous lack of sympathy. Communities such as in Glasgow have banded together to prevent the deportation of their neighbours, whilst Trump supporters stormed Congress. Individuals such as Marcus Rashford have dedicated tireless hours to raising awareness and countering child poverty whilst a never-ending chain of Tory corruption has resulted in only one resignation, as of writing.[1] Similarly, over the course of the pandemic, the UK Government has continuously stripped disabled and vulnerable people of their humanity, treating these lives as expendable, and lifting lockdown restrictions, despite a partial vaccine rollout, the highest rate of new daily cases in the World[2] and a burgeoning Delta variant.

'Monsters, Monstrosities, and the (In)Humanities' was chosen as our overarching theme because it was felt to be applicable for many scholars working within different sub-disciplines and with very different materials. As a result, we received the biggest response on record to our call for papers. The strength and variety of the contributions contained within this issue is a testament to this, as well, of course, to the small army of editors, authors, and peer reviewers that have produced this collection. From an interrogation of the 'cuckold' trope in Elizabethan drama to an examination of food in George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire*, there will be something relevant for all our readers.

We are thrilled to launch this issue alongside our first ever digital conference, especially as we were unable to host our annual conference in 2020. As is traditional, the theme of this conference – 'Dreams, Visions, and Mindscapes' – will also be used for our 2021/22 issue. A full CfP will be released in September 2021, and we encourage all Postgraduate researchers working in English Literature, Film Studies, and Creative Writing to submit their original research. The decision to go digital for our conference was, of course, entirely motivated by concerns around social distancing at conferences and the global pandemic, but we also hope that it will increase exposure for our presenters and reduce the performance burden on them and associated anxieties. All contributions will be hosted on our YouTube channel for a long time to come, facilitating far more views than if our conference had not been virtual. Similarly, by allowing our participants to record

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[1] Matt Hancock 27/6/21
[2] True as of writing <https://graphics.reuters.com/world-coronavirus-tracker-and-maps/countries-and-territories/united-kingdom/> [Accessed 19/07/21].

and upload their reading of their paper in their own time, we have hoped to provide additional flexibility, and allow for as many takes as they wish.

This issue will be my last personal involvement with *Exclamat!on.* From when I joined the team as an Assistant Editor for English during the 2018/19 academic year under Teresa Sanders, to progression as Deputy Editor under Ash Gannicott for the 2019/20 issue. It has been a privilege to rise through the ranks, and an especially fruitful experience to run the journal during the 2020/21 year. My thanks to the founders, past members of the team, all contributors and peer reviewers past and present, all the current team, and especially to Deputy Editor Sophie Smith, whose capable hands I now leave *Exclamat!on* in. I would also like to thank all the team in the University of Exeter HASS PGR team for their ongoing administrative help, especially Yoshi Pakalkaite, Kim Mugford, and Cat Rocks. I am also extremely grateful for the continued financial assistance of the Humanities Activities Award which has supported the physical publication of this issue.

As this issue draws the 2020/21 academic year to a close, we remember the different monsters and examples of inhumanity that we have witnessed through this second year of the global pandemic. The appearance of modern-day saints and monsters is part of our modern fractious and polemic society, and this issue is a call to recognise the global threats – such as the pandemic and climate change – that can only be countered by all of us working together. Many of the responses included here explore the mechanisms by which the related process of Othering occurs in various contexts, and it is only through the setting aside of differences across the political spectrum, and through international cooperation that we can hope to survive.

Joe Holloway

Editor

'When you play the game of thrones, you live or you [dine]': Gastro Politics, Cannibalism, and Food Horror in George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire*

Viviana Castellano

At any other time, it might have made a tasty dish, but tonight all the food was flavored with fear.[1]

You know, he took her to his apartment/ Cut off her head, put the rest of her body/ In the refrigerator, ate her piece by piece/ Put her in the refrigerator, put her in the freezer.[2]

Without a doubt, George R.R. Martin's neo-medieval fantasy saga *A Song of Ice and Fire* (1996-) and its television adaptation *Game of Thrones* (2011-2019) have become part of one of the largest franchises of the modern world and a cultural phenomenon. Part of the attraction is its subversive treatment of traditional fantasy motifs: the amplification of gritty realism, the mythical elements, the unpredictable plotlines and the character arcs. Martin draws particular attention to the image of the body in a variety of vulnerable positions, in which it experiences a transition from 'normal' to 'hyper and horrific', where it lacks agency and is reduced to mere flesh, either through implied or actual carnage.[3] This article examines the 'every day' horrors of the body, what enters it, and what leaves it, supplemented by the social politics that are conferred to both, and provides a lens in which to analyse the darker underbelly of fantasy fiction

The manner in which corporeality is conveyed in the Ice and Fire saga is indicative of a violation of boundary lines through the flouting of established social conventions. As Lorna Piatti-Farnell states, 'the corporeal experience of the body [also] extends to cataloguing what is food, and how it should be treated.'[4] This article will also discuss the ways in which food is used as more than just sustenance as it is a way of challenging, regulating and critiquing society, and negotiating the concept of identity. Drawing from contributions in the field of anthropology, psychology and sociology, the thesis argues that the interrelationship between people, commensality, and food, specifically non-normative associations with food, is central for establishing cultural order in the Ice and Fire world. Martin underlines the significant role food imagery plays and the way it shapes our understanding of characters, human relationships, culture and society in both his secondary world, and the primary world.

The books and the show have changed the way people look at the fantasy fiction genre forever. The saga's popularity can be seen in the wide range of merchandise available including maps, games, jewellery, dragon eggs, replica iron thrones, House Stark shields,

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[1] George R. R. Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, (London: HarperVoyager, 2011) p. 764.

[2] Jagger, M. and Richards, K, 'Too Much Blood' (1983), in *Undercover*: Rolling Stones [CD] Virgin.

[3] Lorna Piatti-Farnell, *Consuming Gothic*, 1st edn, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017) p. 152.

[4] Piatti-Farnell, *Consuming Gothic;* p. 134.

swords, Night's Watch beer, graphic novels; a plethora of books – both academic and of special interest – including but not limited to, psychology, physics, philosophy, gender, history, costumes, art, and cookery, are all dedicated to the saga. Indeed, the saga's dalliance with food and feasting 'as a world-building device' is established right from the start, and is indicative of further boundary violations, through the flouting of established social conventions.[5] Descriptions of food and dining paint a word picture to the reader about the setting, ambience, and economics within the secondary world. Using food imagery to inform readers about the mood and tone of the moment, future events are also foreshadowed, heightening the tension and conflict present in the story. Theon's dream about King Robert and Ned Stark is a good case in point:

> At first it was all wine and roast meat, and Theon was making japes and eyeing the serving girls and having himself a fine time . . . until he noticed that the room was growing darker. […] Suddenly the wine turned bitter in his mouth, and when he looked up from his cup he saw that he was dining with the dead. […] King Robert sat with his guts spilling out on the table from the great gash in his belly, and Lord Eddard was headless beside him.

As well as world building, food also has an Othering element about it – an unfamiliarity. It is 'not us' when it is outside of our bodies, but the moment it enters the mouth, mixes with saliva and is swallowed, it becomes a part of the body and ultimately, is liable to the abject due to both its pleasing and revolting constituents.[6] Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection, as put forward in *Powers of Horror*, discusses the importance of food, disgust and repulsion in connection to bodily fluids, waste, illness and disease. According to Kristeva's visceral model, 'food loathing' is likely the most basic and oldest type of abjection; '[u]nflaggingly, like an inescapable boomerang, a vortex of summons and repulsion places the one haunted by it literally beside himself.'[7] The smell or taste of something repulsive can cause unwanted bodily sensations and these unpleasant elements violate the stable corporeal boundaries upon which the subjective self depends. The abject body disturbs the sense of selfhood as any perceived threat is deemed precarious. The body is forced to expel the threat as a defence mechanism, so that it may once more return to its clean, ordered self. However, as Kristeva states, it is 'not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order.'[8] When Oberyn Martell's head explodes at Tyrion's second trial by combat, Tyrion vomits up his breakfast of 'bacon and sausage and applecakes, and that double helping of fried eggs cooked up with onions and fiery Dornish peppers' as he is repulsed by what he witnesses.[9] The grim reality – that this could have been his own head – is all too real for him. The trial and the combat have disturbed Tyrion's sense of being, alerted him to his

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[5] Chris Crowley, 'When *Game of Thrones* Is Gone, It's the Food I'll Miss Most', (2019) *New York Grub Street*, <https://www.grubstreet.com/2019/04/game-of-thrones-food.html> [accessed 19/07/21]. .

[6] Piatti-Farnell, *Consuming Gothic;* p. 4.

[7] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror : An Essay on Abjection*, transl. by. Leon S. Roudiez, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982) pp. 2,1.

[8] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror;* p. 4.

[9] George R. R. Martin, *A Storm of Swords 2: Blood and Gold* (London: Harper Voyager, 2013) p. 402.

mortality and disrupted his internal sense of order. The food that looked and tasted so good that morning becomes a source of instant disgust, through its violent ejection.

Anne Bower argues that many authors, filmmakers and other creative artists rely on the inclusion of food and its consumption in their work in order to connect with audiences, and to convey vital attributes, identity traits, feelings, and peculiarities about specific characters, building on the world building role referenced earlier.[10] As Gayle Poole states, 'it is possible to "say" things with food', things such as 'resentment, love, compensation, anger, rebellion, withdrawal. This makes it a perfect conveyor of subtext; messages which are often implicit rather than explicit, but surprisingly varied, strong, and sometimes violent or subversive.'[11] Furthermore, the ways in which food and commensality rules construct and regulate the self and the Other through the structured meta-order are reflected in the various feasts held throughout the Seven Kingdoms, which utilize, for example, the ancient custom of guest right or focus on the topic of raw and cooked 'meat'.

Gastro-Politics

According to Roland Barthes, food 'is not only a collection of products that can be used for statistical or nutritional studies. It is also and at the same time, a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations and behaviours', and gastro-politics concerns itself with the use of food as a way of negotiating 'a sense of self within the cultural and social systems'.[12] Food is ubiquitously employed to illustrate various intentions and enhance meaning in the Ice and Fire texts. The famed, sweet, imported luxury lemon cakes that Sansa Stark loves so much denotes not only her expensive taste and social standing but also serves to symbolise the bitterness and disappointment she will face later in the saga.[13] Descriptions of food convey character, and associations between temperament and sexual appetite are often made. The promiscuous of Arianne Martell for example, (a princess of Dorne's) is attributed to the exotic food she consumes. When she endeavours to seduce Ser Arys Oakheart, he recalls the rumours that surround the Dornishmen's hot temper and the 'wild and wanton' ways of the Dornish women: '[f]iery peppers and strange spices heat the blood, she cannot help herself'.[14] In the rest of Westeros, this unrestrained desire violates the conventional order of things. Consider too, how food is used lavishly to create a narrative of excess, and to tempt Daenerys into tasting the sweet poisoned honeyed locusts in the hopes of killing her. She is supplied with 'flagons of chilled wine and sweetwater, with figs, dates, melons, and pomegranates, with pecans and peppers and a big bowl of honeyed locusts', whereas

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[10] Anne Bower, *Reel Food: Essays on Food and Film*, (New York: Routledge, 2004) p. 1.

[11] Gaye Poole, *Reel Meals, Set Meals: Food in Film and Theatre*, (Sydney: Currency Press, 1999) p. 3.

[12] Roland Barthes, 'Toward a Psychosociology of Food Consumption', in *Food and Culture: A Reader,* ed. by Carole Counihan and Pennyh Van Esterick, (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 23-30. p. 24. Gillian Crowther, *Eating Culture: An Anthropological Guide to Food*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013) p. 164.

[13] Sinead McCausland, ''Game of Thrones' and the Tasty Symbolism Behind Its Food', (2017) *Film Shool Rejects* <https://www.filmschoolrejects.com/game-thrones-symbolism-behind-food/> [Accessed 19/07/21).

[14] George R. R. Martin, *A Feast for Crows*, (London: Harper Voyager, 2011) p. 214.

the food sellers around her were peddling 'dog sausages, roast onions, and unborn puppies on a stick'.[15]

Associations between food and violence are also used as a form of entertainment and terror in the Ice and Fire saga and can be especially brutal. The inspection and contemplation of the acquisition of unsullied soldiers in Astapor lead the slaver to ask if Daenerys would like to see the fighting pits. It cannot be denied that the cultural link between the consumption of flesh and violence (including sexual violence), has been one of patriarchal privilege and power; the invitation to witness a bear select which one of three little boys doused in either honey, blood or rotting fish he will eat first as part of the night's merriment is a clear example of this. [16] Tyrion Lannister's encounter with the various mountain clans on his way back from The Eyrie is made even more terrifying when he meets Timmet, the leader of the widely feared Burned Men clan. The clan, who are known to mutilate their own body parts roast babies at their feasts to demonstrate boldness and bravery.[17] These are yet further examples of how Martin's use of food imagery establishes and maintains cultural order. The conflation of abandoned sexual desire and violence with food stuff in the saga helps to delineate unacceptable and improper practices in Westerosi society.

It is axiomatic that the volume, quality, and type of food available in the Seven Kingdoms is governed by the economic situation and current social milieu – a 'mirror of the organization of society on both the broadest and most intimate levels'.[18] Food in the more opulent parts of Westeros such as Highgarden, Dorne, or Kings Landing for example, is significantly more sumptuous and abundant than the food available at The Wall or at Winterfell, and this is symptomatic of the current socio-economic condition of each location. During the European Middle Ages, religion and class played a considerable part in the classification of food items, and the Ice and Fire novels engage in the latter most demonstrably through the depiction of food and commensality. They are immersed in what has commonly come to be known as 'food porn,' or what Rebecca Brink has described as 'food erotica'.[19] The Ice and Fire novels and the television adaptation are famed for their glamourized images of food that, according to Rosalind Coward, arouse the food senses in the same way that pornography arouses sexual pleasure.[20] There are many, but a good example of 'food porn' is the description of sixty-four dishes served at the wedding feast of Alayne Stone (Sansa Stark) and Harrold Hardyng. The dinner honours the sixty-four knights who had competed for a place in Ser Robert's Brotherhood of Winged Knights.

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[15] George R. R. Martin, *A Dance with Dragons 2: After the Feast*, (London: Harper Voyager, 2011) p. 181.

[16] Piatti-Farnell, *Consuming Gothic;* p. 174. George R. R. Martin, *A Storm of Swords 1: Steel and Snow*, (London: Harper Voyager, 2013) p. 321.

[17] George R. R. Martin, *A Game of Thrones*, (London: Harper Voyager, 2011) p. 587.

[18] Carole Counihan, *The Anthropology of Food and Body: Gender, Meaning, and Power*, (New York: Routledge, 1999) p. 1911.

[19] Rebecca Brink, '10 Times George R.R. Martin Described Food More Erotically Than Sex', (2016) *Vulture*, <https://www.vulture.com/2016/04/game-of-thrones-food-er0t9ca.html> [Accessed 19/07/21].

[20] Rosalind Coward, *Female Desire: Women's Sexuality Today*, (London: Paladin Grafton Books, 1984) pp. 101-2.

> From the rivers and the lakes came pike and trout and salmon, from the seas crabs
> and cod and herring. Ducks there were, and capons, peacocks in their plumage and
> swans in almond milk. Suckling pigs were served up crackling with apples in their
> mouths, and three huge aurochs were roasted whole above firepits in the castle
> yard, since they were too big to get through the kitchen doors.

The consumption of meat in the Late Middle Ages was a symbol of authority, strength and warriorhood,[21] and references to meat and mead are abundant in the saga. The idea of meat as a sign of virility continues to this day, with the notion that eating meat is manly in the Western popular imagination. As Amy Calvert argues, the consumption of meat 'can be seen to feed into the patriarchal structure of human-male supremacy, celebrating a primitive masculinity and normalising aggressive characteristics by tying them to male, gendered ('natural'), behaviours'.[22] In his essay 'Steak and Chips', Barthes argues that it is the 'quasi-rawness' of meat that gives it it's superior reputation, for meat is a symbol of life and power, like wine, and grants the consumer 'bull-like strength'.[23] It is a statement affirming the consumer's place and power in the world, and legitimizes one's hegemonic power over another. As Massimo Montanari points out, the desire for meat consumption 'held first place' in the medieval mindset but as time elapsed, birds came to represent 'a "high" position in the natural world', which meant that those of high status were 'perfectly suited' to eat them.[24] The references to winged edible creatures in the Ice and Fire saga is not accidental – they occupy an influential presence in the economic, political and spiritual schema of the people. A wealthy merchant from Qarth for example, makes it very clear that Daenerys' high and exceptional status as 'the Mother of Dragons' merits a banquet of 'peacock and lark's tongue',[25] and it is not for nothing that Renley Baratheon has 'cream swans and spun-sugar unicorns', at his melee feast.[26] Essentially, the rarest and most dangerously acquired items were customarily deemed the 'most prestigious', whereas items that were easier to catch almost always had a much lower placement on the food value scale.[27] Furthermore, the physiological composition of birds took on a more spiritual significance – from a monastic viewpoint, they were light in weight and possessed wings, which endorsed the idea that they were closer to heaven.[28] Hence, eating game or anything that could fly suggested that one could also become closer to God. The hierarchical concept of food items during the Middle Ages was circumscribed in terms of existing social structures relating to class and nobility. Martin undoubtedly utilises this framework for the scenes that relate to food and all the activities that surround it.

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[21] Massimo Montanari, *Medieval Tastes: Food, Cooking, and the Table,* trans. by Beth Archer Brombert, (New York City: Columbia University Press 2015) pp. 70, 160.

[22] Amy Calvert, 'You Are What You (M)Eat: Explorations of Meat-Eating, Masculinity and Masquerade', *Journal of International Women's Studies,* 16 (2014), 19.

[23] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. by Annette Lavers, (London: Vintage Books, 2009) p. 69.

[24] Montanari, *Medieval Tastes;* pp. 70-71.

[25] Martin, *Kings;* p. 386.

[26] Martin, *Kings;* p. 315.

[27] Crowther, *Eating Culture;* p. 9.

[28] Montanari, *Medieval Tastes;* p. 262.

Food creates meaning – it conveys specific feelings about love, pleasure, pain, greed, and is portrayed as an immense source of power and status,[29] – that power also being used to communicate both good and ill intentions. The 'poor fare' served at the Red Wedding for example, some of which 'turned Catelyn's stomach', is a good case in point.[30] Based on the Scottish 'Black Dinner' of 1440, and the 'Glencoe Massacre' of 1692, The Red Wedding refers to the mass slaughter of Robb Stark, his men, and his mother Catelyn at the marriage feast of Edmure Tully and Roslin Frey. The act of revenge, devised by Walder Frey but carried out by Roose Bolton, with the protection of Tywin Lannister was one of the books' most horrific events. Contrary to the opulent banquets described above, the Red Wedding feast reveals a sinister sense of foreboding that precedes the violent bloodbath; a thin watery leek soup is followed by a salad and mushy cold vegetables accompanied by poached river pike, 'jellied calves' brains, and a leche of stringy beef.'[31] Far from being a straightforward, natural process then, food may begin as a physical component, which becomes a somatic experience that indulges the pleasure-seeking senses of the body but that transgresses into the arena of politics, economics, culture, society, and religion; thus being a dynamic and fluent topic.[32] The way food is used, the foods people choose to eat, how, when, and where they are eaten, are all determined by complex codes that govern society, [33] something Counihan terms 'etiquette and food rules'.[34] These food rules are necessary in establishing orderliness and stability in the realm, and underpin Westerosi values and principles. It separates those who would conform, from those who would not, and enables readers to form an understanding about the characters and their predicament.

Feasts in the Ice and Fire saga are never just feasts, as this paper argues. Indeed, 'the dinner table transforms into an important site of sociological and cultural exchange and becomes an entity regulated by the behavioural standards that dictate what is appropriate and what is not, what is 'good' and what is 'bad'' as indicated above.[35] As well as the physical act of eating food, mealtimes are also social events. Distinct from the everyday meal, feasts are usually a much grander affair, as Gillian Crowther points out, with two people or more, and mark an important occasion or hold special significance.[36] The event, which lasts longer than the habitual meal, typically includes special dishes and may include entertainment, alcohol, speeches, and seating plans.

Customs and social decorum dictate etiquette around feasts and banquets. Daenery's wedding to Khal Drogo turns out to be 'an endless day of drinking and feasting and fighting',[37] yet Daenerys is not accustomed to this behaviour, though these traditions form

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[29] Counihan, *Anthropology of Food;* pp. 1926-7.
[30] Martin, *Swords 2;* p. 123.
[31] Martin, *Swords 2;* p. 123.
[32] Piatti-Farnell, *Consuming Gothic;* p. 134. Lorna Piatti-Farnell, *Food and Culture in Contemporary American Fiction*, (New York: Routledge, 2011) p. 1.
[33] Piatti-Farnell, *Consuming Gothic;* p. 4.
[34] Counihan, *Anthropology of Food;* p. 19.
[35] Piatti-Farnell, *Consuming Gothic;* p. 222.
[36] Crowther, *Eating Culture;* p. 156.
[37] Martin, *Thrones;* p. 98.

part of the Dothraki food and commensality culture and thus, part of her future. However, cultural practices are 'not biologically determined' and can be changed, and 'unlearned' at any time.[38] The portrayal of Dothraki food and dining customs along with Danaery's reaction, establish the Dothraki as uncivilised savages who are outside of normalised culture. Daenerys' marriage to Khal Drogo means that she now belongs with the Dothraki and must endeavour to adopt their customs. Failure to do so would mark her as a dissenter, as unorthodox, and would therefore situate her, at least from a Dothraki perspective, on the wrong side of culture; the differences being underscored greatly by symbolic food practices such as the consumption of blood pies, horse flesh, fermented mare's milk and stallion hearts which shall be examined in the next section. Daenerys is forewarned by Magister Illyrio that '[a] Dothraki wedding without at least three deaths is deemed a dull affair',[39] but when a Dothraki warrior fights and kills another Dothraki warrior at the wedding feast for endeavouring to take the woman 'as a stallion mounts a mare', right there and then, Daenerys looks on in horror. As the dancing resumes, and the winner grabs hold of another woman, Daenerys concludes that the Dothraki ways are 'alien and monstrous', situating them outside of cultural orderliness.[40] Interestingly, Daenerys' willingness to adopt these customs preserves the Dothraki micro-cultural order but also allows her to transgress her social situation. These gastrodynamics are significant as they act as a mode of empowerment and play an important role in Daenery's story arc. Piatti-Farnell argues that adherence to food rules and conventions defines individuals for they create a sense of belonging; they engender a feeling of security within the group and of the social status one has adopted.[41] Eating with others at mealtimes, as Gillian Crowther puts it, can become a site for 'the invention of tradition […] that offers a connection with the past, addresses the present, and looks to the future.'[42]

Raw and Cooked 'Meat'

In his 1964 book *The Raw and the Cooked*, prominent structural anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss contrasts the fundamental notions of raw, cooked, and rotten foods through his concept of the culinary triangle. He explores the way they relate to nature and culture. Cooking he argues is what defines humanity and distinguishes it from other species – it is a codified system of ideas that delineates civilisation.[43] Edmund Leach sums it up nicely: 'What Levi-Strauss is getting at is this: *Animals* just eat food; and food is anything available which their instincts place in the category 'edible.' *But human beings*' he continues, 'have no such instincts. It is the conventions of society which decree what is food and what is

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[38] Paul Fieldhouse, *Food and Nutrition: Customs and Culture*, 2nd edn, (Dordrecht: Springer, 1995) p. 2.

[39] Martin, *Thrones;* p. 98.

[40] Martin, *Thrones;* pp. 96-8.

[41] Piatti-Farnell, *Consuming Gothic;* p. 235.

[42] Crowther, *Eating Culture;* p. 155.

[43] Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked: An Introduction to a Science of Mythology*, (London: Pimlico, 1994).

not food'.[44] As Paul Atkinson sees it, food is 'a liminal substance' bridging the gap between nature and culture,[45] for '[o]nce Nature is cooked […] it belongs to Culture'.[46]

Equally important is the concept that cooked food and its meanings are also contingent upon cooking methods. In other words, the culinary triangle demonstrates that the significance of food in society is dependent on whether the item is boiled, roasted, or smoked. Roasting and smoking are seen as more natural methods, whereas boiling belongs to Culture because it requires a vessel in order for the food to be cooked. When thinking of cooking in this way, it is hardly surprising that the cooking of food has been a cultural communicator of ideas for centuries. Men for example, have tended to dominate the time-honoured ritual of the barbecue or of carving the meat because of the association it has with masculinity. Leaning on the work of German sociologist Norbert Elias, Andrew Marnes explains that the 'male-dominated' pastime of barbecuing meat must be separated from everyday reality and is a 'momentary exception to civilisation, by which men could briefly brandish knives and act out their agreed status as powerful providers.'[47] What he seems to suggest, is that the activity of barbecuing involves a certain engagement with the more primitive and ritualistic, yet more desired notions of manliness which are conditions cemented on the idea of heteronormative masculinity. As Coward argues, it is a symbolism of male provision, 'designed to signify the ability of men to provide and the duty of women to prepare and service'.[48] The acknowledgment of food and consumption as more than simply an activity that keeps the body alive is thus, 'complicated by layers of psychological and cultural relevance; [and] this already complex relationship' according to Piatti-Farnell, 'becomes even more opaque when disturbing visualisations of horror materialise the elusive concepts' of edible and inedible foods.[49] Indeed, as Lévi-Strauss argues, 'not only does cooking mark the transition from nature to culture, but through it and by means of it, the human state can be defined with all its attributes'.[50]

The consumption of the raw stallion's heart for example, which Daenerys has spent two weeks preparing for by eating half-clotted blood and dried horseflesh is a perfect example of this. Eating raw animal organs as Daenerys does, can undoubtedly be included within the gamut of inedible and disgusting foodstuffs and considered a violation of Western sensibilities to most readers or viewers. As Piatti-Farnell argues, '[t]he craving for raw, bloody flesh is indeed the calling card for that which is not fully human, and haunts the narrative with its Otherness', though it must also be noted that what makes

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[44] Edmund R. Leach, *Lévi-Strauss*, (London: Fontana/Collins, 1970) p. 32.

[45] Paul Atkinson, 'Eating Virtue', in *The Sociology of Food and Eating: Essays on the Social Significance of Food* ed. by Murcott Anne, (Aldershot: Gower, 1983) pp. 9-17. p. 11.

[46] Michael Symons, *A History of Cooks and Cooking*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press), 2004: p. 104.

[47] Chris Moss, 'Why Are Men Drawn to the Ritual of Barbacues?', (2014) *The Telegraph*, <https://telegraph.co.uk/men/the-filter/10941165/Why-are-men-drawn-to-the-ritual-of-barbecues.html> [Accessed 19/07/21].

[48] Coward, *Female Desire;* p. 112.

[49] Piatti-Farnell, *Consuming Gothic;* p. 4.

[50] Levi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked;* p. 164.

one food item more disgusting than another is something that is also culturally learned.[51] While Daenerys does not 'crave' the stallion's heart literally, there is certainly a metaphorical craving for the power that comes with its consumption. The 'fermented mare's milk, sour-smelling and thick with clots' on the other hand, is waved away lest she vomits, which harks back to Kristeva's argument. The consumption of a raw stallion heart during pregnancy is a Dothraki tradition believed to make the unborn son courageous and strong, and it accords Daenerys an enormous amount of respect from the Khalasar since she fulfils the ritual successfully. The act is depicted as a sign of her emancipation, an awakening of sorts, rather than a regression; she is portrayed as a strong leader, who will endure and reign effectively:

> [S]he took the stallion's heart in both hands, lifted it to her mouth, and plunged her teeth into the tough, stringy flesh. Warm blood filled her mouth and ran down over her chin. The taste threatened to gag her, but she made herself chew and swallow.[52]

While Daenerys' consumption of a stallion's heart forms part of a cultural ritual and is intended to show strength of character, Arya Stark is faced with the choice of eating raw pigeons or going hungry. Since learning to knock birds down with her stick, Arya has experienced very little hunger; she is concerned, in fact, that eating too many pigeons, is making her sick. Her access to plenteous food, specifically birds, can, like Daenerys, be viewed as an indication of agency, though it may be for very different reasons.[53] Not unlike Daenerys, Arya is choosing to survive the only way she knows how. Arya's capture and consumption of raw pigeons or 'feathered rats' highlights not only the mutability surrounding acceptable cultural food practices, but also the downfall of the Stark family and the precarious nature of power. Theon Greyjoy as Reek, is another character worthy of mention. Similarly, his encounter with raw food is also connected to his downfall and certainly not inspiring. Held prisoner by the sadistic Ramsay Bolton, he is kept in a dark, dank cell where he eventually manages to catch a rat. Fearing the wrath of Ramsay, he knows he would do better to hide the rodent but he eats it nonetheless – his mouth full of 'blood and flesh and hair'.[54] In his lonely wretched desperation, Reek:

> crouched down in a corner of his cell, clutching his prize under his chin. Blood ran from the corners of his mouth as he nibbled at the rat with what remained of his teeth, trying to bolt down as much of the warm flesh as he could before the cell was opened. The meat was stringy, but so rich he thought he might be sick. He chewed and swallowed, picking small bones from the holes in his gums where teeth had been yanked out. It hurt to chew, but he was so hungry he could not stop.[55]

Animals are not considered food when consumed in this manner for they require cleaning

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[51] Piatti-Farnell, *Consuming Gothic;* p. 162.

[52] Martin, *Thrones;* p. 472.

[53] Martin, *Thrones;* p. 694.

[54] George R. R. Martin, *A Dance with Dragons 1: Dreams and Dust,* (London: Harper Voyager, 2011) p. 186.

[55] Martin, *Dragons 1;* pp. 186-7.

and cooking, which is part of cultural practice. Tyrion's horse – a present from his brother Jaime when turning twenty-three, is butchered by the sellswords Bronn and Chiggen during their trip along the High Road to the Eyrie. As Chiggen cuts open the horse with a knife and proceeds to eat the raw animal, Tyrion remarks, 'I am not fond of eating horse. Particularly *my* horse'.[56] Horses, like birds and rats, also fall under the category of 'pets', which many readers and viewers may find socially unacceptable to kill and eat. Moreover, pigeons and rats, in particular, have historically been considered dirty and disease-laden animals, highlighting again the ways in which Martin used food to distinguish between savagery and cultural order.

Interestingly, and ironically, the consumption of pets is reversed and explored in the television show when Ramsay Bolton's 'pet' dogs eat their own master at Sansa's orders. The sadistic Ramsay, 'a beast in human skin',[57] has, amongst other atrocious things, trained his wild dogs to hunt down and devour humans upon his command, and women, as Wyman Manderly puts it, 'are his favorite prey'.[58] After Ramsay catches the women he has stripped and released into the woods, he rapes and flays them, then 'feeds their corpses to his dogs, and brings their skins back to the Dreadfort as trophies. If they have given him good sport, he slits their throats before he skins them'.[59] Starved for seven days, however, the dogs turn from 'loyal beasts' to ravenous animals, and in a truly violent display of payback, the smell of blood upon Ramsay's face, who is at this point a prisoner of Jon Snow, activates the dogs' natural instincts, and they devour him.[60] The significance of this scene is the affect it is designed to have on its audience. Ramsey's brutal death is particularly horrific, yet it seems to generate a modicum of sadistic satisfaction in viewers whose morality will no doubt be called into question. This act, an inversion of power, posits Ramsey as nothing more than a slab of meat, devoid of humanity – an edible item – through which Sansa is empowered. This reinforces the point that food, especially the portrayal of non-normative food such as raw flesh and organs function as a moderator for the cultural order, and fashions an understanding of human relationships, along with that of the individual self.

The consumption of '[r]aw meat and raw organs, pets or otherwise, is too 'uncivilised' and too unashamedly reminiscent of the live animal they came from to be consumed without a hint of horror or disgust'.[61] There is a subtle suggestion running throughout the saga that meat should only really be consumed in its cooked form, highlighting Strauss' point. Any depiction of raw consumed flesh is considered primitive and barbaric, if not an act of desperation. When Chiggen comments on how good Tyrion's horse tastes, 'swallow[ing] the raw meat in two bites', Bronn replies, '[b]etter if you fry it up with onions.'[62] As Piatti-Farnell points out, '[w]hat communicates the horror here is the breach in boundaries that

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[56] Martin, *Thrones;* pp. 394-5.

[57] Martin, *Dragons 1;* p. 456.

[58] Martin, *Dragons 1;* p. 456.

[59] Martin, *Dragons 1;* p. 456.

[60] 'Battle of the Bastards', *Game of Thrones, The Complete Sixth Season, Episode 9*, Miguel Sapochnik, (Warner Home Studio, 2016).

[61] Piatti-Farnell, *Consuming Gothic;* p. 159.

[62] Martin, *Thrones;* p. 315.

designate the human from the beast, for humans do not consume flesh and organs raw, the cooking of these matters clearly acting as a 'civilising process',[63] echoing Lévi-Strauss' point. When Jon Snow is elected as Lord Commander of the Night's Watch, the violent Cotter Pyke, tells him, 'if you muck this up, I'm going to rip your liver out and eat it raw with onions',[64] which suggests that the eating of raw flesh and organs is intended to evoke fear as it contrasts human civilisation and evolution. Raw flesh, as seen here, especially of that belonging to humans is not socially or culturally acceptable and has, in literature and the arts been reserved for wild bestial types who have been separated from culture, which leads on to another prominent theme in the series.

Cannibalism

Popular culture makes many references to anthropophagy, better known as cannibalism, the consumption of human flesh and organs by other humans. Society's abhorrence and fascination with the topic has led to a plethora of literary and on-screen depictions throughout the ages, from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (c.8 AD), Victorian Penny Dreadfuls, Thomas Harris's 1981 creation of Hannibal Lecter in his novel *Red Dragon*, and various other television and movie depictions. From a 'psychogenic' perspective, as Peggy Reeves Sanday states, cannibalism is said to fulfil specific psychosexual desires, which often emerge orally.[65] Yet the reasons for cannibalism are many and the very concept differs in meaning from culture to culture – on one hand, it may be described as an abhorrent act that surpasses the boundaries of humanity, whilst for Roman Catholics the cannibalism involved in transubstantiation can be seen as a sacred and cherished act.[66]

Some of the most shocking scenes in the Ice and Fire saga are loaded with cannibal imagery and food horror, and the inclusion of cannibalism, as Sanday argues, is 'never just about eating but is primarily a medium for nongustatory messages' – messages that restore and maintain 'the cultural order'.[67] According to Westerosi legend, four hundred years before the Targaryen conquest, the Skagosi 'savages' raided the neighbouring island of Skane, then slaughtered and feasted upon the flesh of Skanish men for two weeks in a massacre that became notoriously known as The Feast of Skane.[68] As Samwell Tarly reveals, the Skagosi allegedly lived in caves on the now uninhabited island, rode shaggy unicorns into battle and 'ate the hearts and livers of the men they slew'.[69] Though the act of murder as a straightforward concept is horrific in its own right, the act of killing and then eating another of the same species becomes even more complicated because the humanity of the consumer and the person being consumed is significantly reduced. Unlike animals, humans are governed by ethical and moral principles in relation to food and will

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[63] Piatti-Farnell, *Consuming Gothic;* p. 162.

[64] Martin, *Swords 2;* p. 522.

[65] Peggy Reeves Sanday, *Divine Hunger: Cannibalism as a Cultural System*, (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 1995) pp. 3,10,11.

[66]Sanday, *Divine Hunger;* p. x.

[67] Sanday, *Divine Hunger;* p. 3.

[68] George R. R. Martin, Elio Garcia, and Linda Antonsson, *The World of Ice & Fire: The Untold History of Westeros and the Game of Thrones*, (London: Harper Voyager, 2014) p. 139.

[69] Martin, *Crows;* p. 248.

therefore be more selective about what they choose to eat. Cannibalism operates on a deeper cultural level because the act of cannibalism objectifies the subject, making it completely worthless and thus, disposable. It is this expendability – the fear of identity loss and ultimately, the eradication of the human race that the tales endeavour to highlight.[70] As Pasi Falk states, 'the oral fear is of losing oneself/identity, in the last instance, the fear of death.'[71] The old stories and songs about cannibalism continue to filter down into current Westerosi narratives, which still depict the ancient Skagosi as wild barbarians belonging to a hostile island that ships and voyagers avoid at all costs. Roro Uhoris, the Tyroshi pirate, smuggler, and captain of the *Cobblecat* ship for example, chooses to sail past the 'isle of unicorns and cannibals', as he is too frightened to moor his ship there.[72] The figure of the cannibal, as Kristen Guest points out, has almost always been concerned with the Othering of a pariah – driving it beyond the margins of civilised society, and enforcing the border that separates a cultured 'us' and a savage 'them'.[73] As Marina Warner explains,

> [c]annibalism helped to justify, of course, the presence of the invader, the settler, the trader, bringing civilisation. The centre has to draw outlines to give itself definition. The city has need of the barbarians to know what it is. The self needs the other to establish a sense of integral identity.[74]

Interestingly, Guest argues that the cannibal figure could be read as an exposition of the perviousness and fragility of boundary lines which delineate the differences between the civilised and the savage, echoing the thesis for this article.[75] After all, as Michele Montaigne has argued, 'everyone gives the title of barbarism to everything which is not in use in his own country',[76] but as Maggie Kilgour puts it, 'we have known that the difference is illusory: the cannibal is us'.[77] From Cannibal Bay in the Shivering Sea to Wildling tribes north of the wall who consume their own dead 'when they cannot feast upon the flesh of foes and strangers',[78] tales of cannibalism always seem to circulate as sensationalised horror stories about 'Other' people from the far flung corners of the seven kingdoms. Perhaps the author is asking his readers to contemplate just what it is that makes the monster. Who, in fact, is the civilised, and who is the savage?

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[70] Piatti-Farnell, *Consuming Gothic;* pp. 143-4.

[71] Pasi Falk, *The Consuming Body*, (London: Sage Publications, 1994) p. 86.

[72] Martin, *Crows;* p. 144.

[73] Kristen Guest, 'Introduction', in *Eating Their Words: Cannibalism and the Boundaries of Cultural Identity* ed. by Kristen Guest, (Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 2001) pp. 1-9. p. 2.

[74] Marina Warner, *Managing Monsters: Six Myths of Our Time: The 1994 Reith Lectures*, (London: Vintage, 1994) p. 74.

[75] Guest, 'Introduction', p. 2.

[76] Michel de Montaigne and William Hazlitt, *The Works of Michael De Montaigne; Comprising His Essays, Letters and Journey through German and Italy. With Notes from All the Commentators, Biographical and Bibliographical Notices, &C., &C*, (Philadelphia: J.W. Moore, 1856) p. 115.

[77]Maggie Kilgour, 'Foreward', in *Eating Their Words: Cannibalism and the Boundaries of Cultural Identity*ed. by Kristen Guest, (Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 2001) pp. vii-viii. p. viii.

[78] Martin, Garcia, and Antonsson, *The World of Ice & Fire: The Untold History of Westeros and the Game of Thrones* (London: Harper Voyager, 2014) p. 286.

As the skinchanger Varamyr Sixskins comments in the prologue to *A Dance with Dragons*, '[m]en may eat the flesh of beasts and beasts the flesh of men, but the man who eats the flesh of a man is an abomination',[79] revealing the extent of Westerosi disapproval toward this very real practice. Tyrion, for example, is told about a baker who is roasted 'in his own oven' during the riot in Kings Landing, led by a starving mob, in order to relieve them of their famine.[80] His concerns 'about what sorts of flesh might be going into the kettles of the pot-shops down in Flea Bottom',[81]make it abundantly clear that animal meat is not the only flesh being consumed in Westeros. A particular moment of cannibalistic food horror and disgust appears when Theon/Reek is castrated and who, in the television show looks on in pain while Ramsay Bolton bites into a large sausage – an intended allusion to Theon's severed member.[82] Relegated to mere flesh and blood, 'the treatment of the human body here as 'meat' devoids it of its social agency' as Piatti-Farnell states, and Theon is a prime example of how identity and corporeal agency can be robbed slowly, beginning with his confinement and then his enslavement. Tortured by Ramsay, Theon is relegated to eating whatever he can locate in order to sustain himself, and watching a significant part of his own body – ironically, a part he enjoyed making sufficient use of being amputated and eaten in his very presence strips him of agency and his identity simultaneously. Indeed, '[d]eprived of the cultural structures that identify the human as superior and separate from other creatures within the animal kingdom, the body' as Piatti Farnell continues, 'is reduced to flesh and even more horrifically, to food,'[83]

Dark tales of cannibalism haunt Castle Harrenhal and serve as childhood cautionary tales, as Jaime Lannister's chapter shows. Jaime recalls the story of Lady Danelle Lothston, also known as 'mad Lady Lothston' who supposedly 'bathed in tubs of blood and presided over feasts of human flesh.'[84] Consider also that the current captives at Harrenhal are kept like livestock for the slaughter, captured and fettered until they are plucked from the pen where they are 'slowly reconceptualised as cattle by their peers'.[85] Vargo 'The Goat' Hoat, leader of the Brave Companions and Lord of Harrenhal for a time, is partial to removing the body parts of his prisoners, that is, until he is hacked to pieces and unknowingly fed to his own captives and to himself, while his torso is kept alive. Jaime Lannister knows all too well how '[Vargo] enjoys cutting off hands. He enjoys cutting off feet as well. He doesn't seem to need a reason'.[86] Vargo stands as a marker of sub-human species, straddling the boundaries of cultural order and savagery. Throughout the saga, Vargo is portrayed as a man lacking in humanity, with no emotion or empathy. He also has a heavy lisp – the emphasis on the mouth and on language – the primordial and fundamentally human acts of eating and speaking. As Piatti-Farnell argues, '[t]he mouth is central in

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[79] Martin, *Dragons 1;* p. 2.
[80] Martin, *Kings;* p. 243.
[81] Martin, *Kings;* p. 243.
[82] 'Mhysa', *Game of Thrones: The Complete Third Season, Episode 10*, David Nutter, (Warner Home Video, 2013).
[83] Piatti-Farnell, *Consuming Gothic;* p. 147.
[84] Piatti-Farnell, *Consuming Gothic*. Crows. p. 453.
[85] Piatti-Farnell, *Consuming Gothic;* p. 143.
[86] Martin, *Swords 1;* p. 513.

outlining the extent of corporeality – that is, the cultural conventions surrounding the limits and limitations of the human body.'[87] Readers are told that 'the Mountain killed [Vargo] piece by piece. A hand one day, a foot the next, lopped off neat and clean' and prolonged his pain by bandaging up his stumps.[88] More significantly, the feast of 'roast goat' – an act of 'benign cannibalism' made with Vargo's own limbs which feeds the unsuspecting starving prisoners and Vargo Hoat himself, is verification that '[w]ith cannibalistic butchery and consumption, what is slayed is the image of the superior, and culturally untouchable, human being'. [89] It is evident that it is not merely Vargo's body that is being slaughtered here. The double meaning of Vargo's death signals not only the end to the corporeal atrocities, but also the annihilation of supremacy. The food horror of 'benign cannibalism' here is effective but another type of cannibalism – 'autophagy', is also relevant. The eating of the self,[90] is also mentioned in the first instalment of the Ice and Fire series when Daenerys threatens her brother with self-consumption after he manhandles her, 'pray that Khal Drogo does not hear of this, or he will cut open your belly and feed you your own entrails.'[91] Tyrion is also threatened with self-consumption when Bronn tells him he has a 'bold tongue' and that '[o]ne day someone is like to cut it out and make [him] eat it.'[92] Again, this emphasises the way in which food and acceptable methods of consumption are used to separate those inside the boundaries of the cultural order and the very tenuous human condition.

The Pentoshi aphorism '[n]ever ask the baker what went into the pie. Just eat',[93] is further confirmation that cannibalism is practiced throughout the Seven Kingdoms and a lot more common than originally believed. In the spirit of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus,* whose eponymous hero Titus seeks to avenge the rape of his daughter Lavinia by baking Queen Tamora's evil sons into a pie and serving it to her for their evil deeds,[94] Ser Wyman Manderly, it is strongly implied, kills three of Walder Frey's sons as payback for the Red Wedding.[95] He has each of them baked in pies which are presented at the wedding of Ramsay and 'Arya' as '[t]he best pie you've ever tasted': There are '[t]hree great wedding pies, as wide across as wagon wheels, their flaky crusts stuffed to bursting with carrots, onions, turnips, parsnips, mushrooms, and chunks of seasoned pork swimming in a savory brown gravy."[96] After the pie is served, a drunken Ser Wyman insists that the bard performs a song about the Rat Cook, a Westerosi legend which tells of a cook who served the Andal king his own son in the infamous 'prince-and-bacon pie'. In the television programme, it is Arya who presents the pies to Walder Frey as payback for The Red Wedding massacre. It is clear from this that Arya, as well as Sansa Stark search for revenge

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[87] Piatti-Farnell, *Consuming Gothic;* p. 155.
[88] Martin, *Crows;* p. 330.
[89] Carole A. Travis-Henikoff, *Dinner with a Cannibal: The Complete History of Mankind's Oldest Taboo*, (Santa Monica, California: Santa Monica Press, 2008) p. 25. Piatti-Farnell, *Consuming Gothic;* p. 144.
[90] Travis-Henikoff, *Dinner with a Cannibal;* p. 25.
[91] Martin, *Thrones;* p. 382.
[92] Martin, *Thrones;* p. 439.
[93] Martin, *Dragons 2;* p. 414.
[94] William Shakepeare, *The Tragedy of Titus Andronicus*, (Ontario, Canada: Devoted Publishing), 2016.
[95] Martin, *Dragons 1;* p. 454.
[96] Martin, *Dragons 1;* p. 576.

and justice through food-related acts. As Vivian Halloran points out, works of this kind arouse a 'primal fear' connected with 'covered foods' for the concealment of such foods suggests that the diners have no absolute knowledge of what 'meat', has gone into the pies, especially since from a more sinister perspective, pies have been employed throughout history to hide a multitude of non-edible objects.[97] The not-knowing of humans eating humans disguised through ordinary food items is unsettling. Furthermore, what disturbs viewers and readers is the corrupted image of the British meat pie – usually a treasured symbol of comfort food, now warped, through its inclusion of human flesh.[98]

In addition to their practical usage as disposable food storage containers, pie 'coffins' played a significant role in medieval banquets, which featured live animals such as pigeons, frogs, thrushes and blackbirds. These '*entremets*' as they were known, which means 'between dishes' were provided for the purpose of 'entertainment' and were intended to 'impress' and 'astonish' guests.[99]An *entremet* of a similar kind is portrayed at the wedding celebration of Joffrey Baratheon and Margaery Tyrell. As the large baked pigeon pie is carried and laid down, Joffrey and Margaery cut the pie open together with the greatsword, a phallic symbol if ever there was one, and doves fly out to everyone's amazement.[100] In a dark twist to the historical custom, the television show portrays Joffrey as he proceeds to single-handedly slash the pie open ferociously and release the birds to the guests' delight. In the process, some of the doves are slaughtered and fail to emerge, instead laying butchered in the midst of the pie, the red blood a stark contrast against the white doves as the guests continue to feast unknowingly.[101] The symbolism of entrapment recalls Ned Stark's incarceration, his potential freedom at the Wall, but ultimately, his beheading by the sword at Joffrey's command.

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[97] Vivian Halloran, ''Sinister Pastry: British "Meat" Pies ', in *Titus and Sweeney Todd* ed. by Cynthia J. Miller and Bowden Van Riper, (Bloomsbury: New York, London, 2017), pp. 325-38. p. 327. Janet Clarkson, *Pie: A Global History*, (Chicago: University. of Chicago Press, 2009).

[98] Halloran, ''Sinister Pastry: British "Meat" Pies ', p. 327.

[99] David C. Sutton, 'Four and Twenty Blackbirds Baked in a Pie: A History of Surprise Stuffings', in *Wrapped & Stuffed Foods: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery 2012* ed. by Mark McWilliams, (Totnes: Prospect Books, 2013), pp. 285-94. p. 287.

[100] Martin, *Swords 2;* p. 256.

[101] 'The Lion and the Rose', *Game of Thrones: The Complete Fourth Season, Episode 2* Alex Graves, (Warner Home Video, 2015).

Conclusion

It is clear that though eating is one of the most basic of human activities, the partaking of food is laden with social rules, religious implications and cultural significance on what can and cannot be eaten. Furthermore, how humans eat food and with whom also has social meaning. Belief systems, life practices and choices, including items for consumption, food or otherwise, can reveal a great deal about people as individuals or as a collective group. Food, and indeed its representation in popular culture is loaded with subtext and it is a combination of these things that define what is 'good' and 'bad' in terms of consumption. The food people elect to eat, and how they eat it transmits vital information about what they stand for, how they view and value life, and their relationships within it. It is used to express class, status, power and sexuality and is a symbol of identity and otherness. Martin undoubtedly uses food imagery, especially those items that are considered socially unacceptable, or non-normative as a way of highlighting the way in which food and commensality exist to establish and regulate the cultural order in Westeros. When survival is compromised, the basic human drive for survival takes over and humans are not too dissimilar to animals. Many in the saga walk a fine line on the boundary of animal and human, savage and cultured – seen through such characters as Daenerys, Arya, Theon, Tyrion, and many others. Indubitably relationships with food are emphasised by the author in order to make possible an interrogation of the self, the other and an *aide-memoire* of our most primal fears.

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Tinderbox

Cassandra Passarelli

Content Warning: This short story retells the distressing story of the Grenfell Fire

(A cautionary tale of cut corners and dishonoured responsibilities.)

My renovation reads like the Book of Genesis. Conceived by Clifford Weardon and Associates, birthed by AE Symes in '74, I was refurbed by Leadbitter, begat of Bouygues, undercut by Rydon, designed by Studio E, surveyed by Artelia, deferred to Harley Curtain Wall, adopted by Harley Facades, who contracted Omnis, who obtained the cladding from Arconic and insulation from Celotex.

Pyred in 2017.

A tall, scratched fridge-freezer, rubber gaskets impregnated with black mould, plastic egg-holders cracked, vegetable drawers cloudy, stood outside one of those terraced columned homes in Blenheim Crescent. Jorge hefted it away before dawn, in the hope of making Rosario smile. My lifts were out of order, but Mohammed from the sixth helped Jorge lug it to his place on the fourth. Mo watched as Jorge plugged it in. There was a silent moment till it whirred into action and they cheered.

This lower edge of Ladbroke, once known for its piggeries and brickyard trenches of stagnant water, was one of London's more surly slums. Its potteries housed Irish immigrants whose floors dipped into swamp while, at the drier extremity, entire families slept on straw mattresses. Two taverns, the Black Boy and the King's Arms, served the Dales' two-hundred and fifty hovels whose waters drained into a pool known as the ocean. Life expectancy hovered around eleven till the area was sanitised in the late 1800s. Latimer Road's railway streets were later turned into rooming houses, let to the Windrush arrivals.

Béton brut defied forties' optimism. A slum clearance order in the sixties made way for generation Brutalist (that include my siblings, Trellick, Brunswick and South Bank). Inside my concrete slabs, some nine-hundred units (I use the word deliberately) of Lancaster West Estate were imagined into existence. My sixty-seven-metre citadel torso towered over supine, rigor-mortised limbs served by walkways. I was an impersonal colossus, unneighbourly to the point of misanthropic, an unsociable autistic genius of a solution, living up to my architects' brutish aspiration, embodying hostility. Guarinville, Greyneville, Grenfield. In old French 'guarin' is guard and 'ville', settlement; sidling its way into English they called me Grenfell. Such were the guarded settlements of impregnable Norman castles; their keeps, moats and baileys built to withstand years of siege.

When Rosario came home from vacuuming office floors a couple of hours later she laughed and opened her mouth to Jorge's kiss. That was three long years ago. Before the cough crept into her lungs and St Mary's diagnosis. Before the complications, before Jorge lost her. Everything else kept going as before; the sun rose, the daytime guard stubbed out his last cigarette before leaving him to the monitors of The Portobello Hotel. His mother, in Ciudad Bolívar, answered his call each Sunday. The FF175BP Hotpoint chilled his beers and unfinished take-aways.

The post-war British government's answer to 'the housing problem' was low-cost Brutalism. Compatible with utopian socialist ideology, my generation's pared-back structures were championed as honest. We gave a dehumanised workforce termite-cartons with views onto the city they served and were disregarded by. For forty-three

years in my hundred and twenty-nine compartments, people came into the world and left it. They made love and fought. They hung mezuzahs on their doorframes, placed prayer mats toward Mecca, genuflected to Coptic statues of the Virgin and offered malt liquor to the dead. Loneliness, anger and desolation alongside joy and optimism blossomed and withered in my fuselage. Kith of all ages, ethnicity, sexual and religious inclination: Syrian refugees from civil war, Afghanis fleeing persecution, Ethiopians running from collectivisation, Somalis escaping starvation and West Africans taking flight from political unrest.

Nicknamed the Moroccan Tower, around forty Jewish and Muslim Berber families sought sanctuary within my walls. Neighbours observed various Sabbaths, celebrated Chanukah or Ramadan, sharing food from their homeland with one another. Circumcisions, baptisms, bar mitzvahs and aqeeqahs were marked by kin. People dozed on my sofas, cooked meals in my kitchens or slept, dreamless, on my floors. Friendships were formed and marriages brokered. Allied in privation, tenants didn't turn their gaze from one another. They lived hand-to-mouth, shoulder-to-shoulder.

A honeycomb of holding cells, I provided shelter for the dispossessed, refugees, reprobates, chronically ill and jobless. For the hard-working, imaginative, creative, and ambitious. Oppressive stairwells, juddering lifts, stinking rubbish chutes and strip lights are implausible constituents for home, yet they made me theirs. No warm welcomes awaited them. Unaided, they trawled the gridlocked avenues of the National Health Service. Unassisted, they decoded the obstacle course of social services, unravelled Jobseekers Allowance or Universal Credit. They made sense of Housing Benefit, Citizens Advice and Mental Health Services. Without language or funds, some found unregulated and illegal work. Others studied or started small enterprises. They persevered because they had no choice.

Daughters skipped out to the Aldridge Academy in grey blazers and plaid skirts, backpacks heavy with books. Toddlers dawdled in St Clement and St James forest green sweaters. Mothers stumbled back from early morning cleaning jobs. Fathers stalked the early hours after their shifts. Teenage hoodies groped in my stairwells or smoked weed by the rubbish chute. Old-school Londoners with drinker's nose snuck in late from the Sun in Splendour or the Elgin. Their blotched and weary wives, laden with Westfield carrier-bags or pushing prams, returned like ants on pheromone trails. Agile North African boys, bathed in sweat, were buzzed in after lifting weights in the Leisure Centre. Against my silhouette, drill gangs shot videos and wielded machetes or dealt drugs in my urine-soaked corners. Kids in QPR strips strode out to watch games on Loftus Road with their old men. Families walked to Kensal Rise Cemetery or Wormwood Scrubs.

Until Jorge's night off in mid-June. Around midnight he smelled smoke from behind the fridge. He called the fire brigade. Flames were licking at the ceiling by the time they showed up. They hosed my walls and left. A little before one Jorge fell asleep on the sofa. He was awakened by the fire's flared-back slurp. Jorge dialled 999, threw Rosario's wedding ring and his passport into a carryall and rang his neighbours' bells. Signs in my hallways told them to stay put if the fire was not in their flat. Jorge took a lift down and

waited for the fire engines to arrive. His neighbours preferred to stay. But slowly, my dwellers abandoned me; by two in the morning half were on the street, bundled in duvets or bedspreads. The contagion spread up my eastern side, across my northern face and engulfed my apparel from the second to the twenty-fourth storey.

Shortly before three, in the adrenaline-laced, nerve-torn bedlam, the fire brigade told my remaining occupants to leave. For many it was too late, my stairwells flush with fumes, smog seeping under doorsills, smoke pluming from windows. Like crabs, those who remained scuttled upstairs to the firetrap of twenty-third floor. Outside, the conflagration drew sirens, flashing lights, choppers, neighbours, camera crews, journalists. It gushed viscid soot, tar and ash, sobbing men and women, knotted sheets lowering bodies, falling people, a swaddled baby miraculously caught. Jorge ran to bring bottles of water and flasks of tea from nearby houses. He hugged people he knew and took the hands of those he didn't. In that relentless night, Jorge saw everyone. He worked alongside Mo, caught sight of Amira nursing the baby, and their three daughters. He glimpsed his first love at a window, silhouetted against flames, heedless. He hugged his mother. Rosario, looking up from a child she was tending, mouthed 'Te amo'. Even Pappi's ghost was there.

Around him, people were shouting into their mobiles:

'Try the stairs.'

'I love you.'

'Wrap your face in a wet towel.'

'Breathe out the window.'

There were no fire escapes. No alarms. No sprinklers. No drills. No fire engine access. No instructions to leave. No shelter. No information about loved ones. No food or clothing. No counselling. No school. No apologies. No register of residents, or who they sublet to. No consolation for those who stumbled down stairwells, tripping over dead bodies. No words of comfort for those from whom a hand had slipped, swallowed by the clag.

How does Jorge live with this story? Does he blame the fridge or the family that dumped it in the street? Not Mo, surely, who helped lug the fridge to the lift. The government in power the year I was built. The Borough of Kensington and Chelsea that saved £293,368 fitting aluminium rather than zinc cladding. Should he curse the Lady of Chiquinquirá Mama prays to or the Allah of his neighbours? Maybe Jorge bears my agony, staggering under its weight, the way he hauled that old Hotpoint on his shoulders. How do you live with this story? The paving stones, your clothes, food, bus, packages, music and home… all laid, stitched, cooked, driven, delivered, played, built and cleaned by those just like the seventy-two. Or seventy-seven. Or eighty, perhaps. Who knows?

And me? A lanky, blackened and scorched skeleton; a macabre monument shrouded in a white *kaffan*. I'm no longer the guarded settlement, nobody's Brutalist wet-dream or newly-clad version of it. No genius solution to anything. No sanctuary for anyone. When

you have moved on from London's second Great Fire to new tragedies, the government will not deliver on mothballed promises. Some of the charred fruit of my loins will still be homeless, lives so full of heartache they simply hope to pass through any gate of oblivion to find peace. Without synapses or soul, my carcass is an emblem, severed limbs prone in my shadow. My dilating hive of pulsing residents, with their rhythmic breaths, warm billowing organs and rich emotional lives shrunk to an incinerated cellular husk. A charred memento mori, dark warning to the scattered skyscrapers across this city. Scorched and naked, holding vigil till I'm laid to rest.

'Underground with the mutties': The Katabatic Other and the Monsters Below in Jeff VanderMeer's *Veniss Underground*

Hannah Latham

Jeff VanderMeer's posthuman, science fiction novel *Veniss Underground* centres itself around the concept of the 'New Weird', a 'type of urban, secondary-world fantasy that subverts the romanticized ideas about place [...] by choosing realistic, complex real-world models as the jumping off point for the creation of settings that may combine elements of both science fiction and fantasy.'[1] The 'New Weird', coined by John Harrison in 2003, is a mutation of classical or 'Old' weird that emerged in the 1980s.[2] There is no single definition of 'New Weird'; in a way that is very emblematic of the genre itself, it is ever-mutable. Noys and Murphy define the 'New Weird' as a genre 'characterized as a new sensibility of welcoming the alien and the monstrous as sites of affirmation and becoming,'[3] while Sheryl Vint categorises it as 'a blend of science fiction, Surrealism, fantasy, magical realism, and Lovecraftian horror'.[4] VanderMeer himself discusses the genre's connection to Old Weird through its use of Lovecraftian body horror and its inherent viscerality.[5] As a synthesised exploration of the alien Other,[6] *Veniss Underground* is the hallmark of 'New Weird'; it is a novel that engages with the monstrous in a way that is inherently connected to the human body and mind, pushing the boundaries of the world that contains them. It follows the tale of three protagonists – Nicholas, Nicola, and Shadrach – through the various spaces of Veniss and its surroundings both above and below ground. Nicholas attempts to make a living in the city of Veniss through the hobby of 'Living Art' (a form of bioengineering that involves modifying and splicing organic matter to create new creatures), while his twin, Nicola, is a programmer high above the city's ground level. Shadrach, Nicola's former lover and denizen of Veniss Underground, the below level realm that houses all manner of monstrosities both human and nonhuman, is forced to travel back to his home in order to rescue Nicola when she is captured by the novel's antagonist, the creator-god Quin.

The novel is a loose narrative retelling of the classical myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, a katabatic quest to return a lost lover from an underground realm that includes all the thematic markers of the katabatic myth model. Katabasis, the ancient Greek term for a downward journey below ground into a space that can be categorised as Hell, involves a direct confrontation with the monstrous Other, a separate and separated entity residing

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[1] Jeff VanderMeer and Ann VanderMeer, *The New Weird: It's Alive?* (California: Tachyon Publications, 2008), p. xvi.

[2] Benjamin Noys, Timothy S. Murphy, 'Introduction: Old and New Weird' *Genre* 1, 42 (2) (2016), pp. 117-134, (p. 120).

[3] Ibid, p. 125.

[4] Sherryl Vint, 'Introduction: special issue on China Mieville.' *Extrapolation*, vol. 50, no. 2 (2009), pp. 197-199 (p. 197).

[5] Jeff VanderMeer and Ann VanderMeer, *The New Weird: It's Alive?* p. xvi.

[6] Jonathan Harvey, 'The Wild West and the New Weird in K. J. Bishop's "The Etched City" and China Miéville's "Iron Council"', *Contemporary Literature*, 53.1 (2012), 87-113 (p. 91).

in said hellspace. In *Hell in Contemporary Literature*, Falconer discusses the form that katabases take in modern narratives; it is, ultimately, a journey of the protagonist's self and their encounter with Other worlds and Other forces, one which ends in the destruction or the rebirth of the self as a product of their journey.[7] While the novel has been linked to discussions on the posthuman and New Weird in general, and while authors such as Falconer or David Pike discuss the use of katabasis in modern literature, katabasis has never been previously applied to *Veniss Underground,* nor in a way that focuses on the space of hell itself and its effect on the katabatant. By reading the novel through the lens of the katabatic, the way it interacts with the hallmarks of the Other and New Weird criteria become more specified and align with certain categorisations entirely dependent on the merging of these genres. What emerges, therefore, is the concept of the 'katabatic Other'. The Other is, of course, a longstanding theory often seen as being steeped in psychoanalytic tradition – the work of Lacan and Freud exemplifying this – that, at its core, is about binary opposition (us versus them, human versus nonhuman/animal, here versus there). When paired with katabasis, the 'Other' still retains this oppositional effect by having everything that is considered as 'other' under the banner of either a separated katabatic realm used to contain it, or as anything that has seeped through said realm into the real world. It is a product of the hellspace and only emerges when a katabatic journey is undertaken.

What, then, is the katabatic Other in *Veniss Underground*, and how do the protagonists interact with and ultimately become the novel's true monsters? VanderMeer himself states that 'body transformations and dislocations create a visceral, contemporary take on the kind of visionary horror best exemplified by the work of Lovecraft' in a way that distinctly moves past 'Lovecraft's coyness in recounting events in which the monster or horror can never fully be revealed or explained.'[8] VanderMeer's monsters are constructed as part of the novel's katabatic journey and as a product of the novel's 'hellspace', the titular Veniss Underground. Monsters have historically been delegated to 'other' spaces; the marginalisation of monsters, especially connected to katabatic narratives, can be seen in Homer's *Odyssey*, in which Odysseus's nekyia (a precursor to katabasis) forces him to journey beyond the confines of the known world on the advice of Circe.[9] Shildrick notes that the 'use of the term 'monster' or 'monstrous' [...] has extensive historical precedents' and it used to describe beings that are 'always haunting [...] margins, simultaneously seductive and threatening'.[10] The bowels of the city, underground caves, and the dark recesses of the forest have always been places steeped in monstrous tradition.[11] They are designated as far apart from the known and the safe as possible, and it is only upon a

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[7] Rachel Falconer, *Hell in Contemporary Literature: Western Descent Narratives Since 1945* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), p. 1.

[8] Jeff VanderMeer and Ann VanderMeer, *The New Weird: It's Alive?*, p. x.

[9] Rhys Carpenter, *Folk Tale, Fiction and the Saga in the Homeric Epics*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1946), p. 109.

[10] Margrit Shildrick, *Embodying the Monster*: *Encounters with the Vulnerable Self* (Newbury Park: SAGE Publications, 2001), p. 12-13; p. 14.

[11] Manuel Aguirre, *The Closed Space: Horror Literature and Western Symbolism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), p. 2.

deliberate infringement of the space in which they reside that they are encountered. Despite this, the monstrous is somewhat uncontainable; these historical and literary boundaries are in fact permeable, and modern katabatic narratives, especially those connected to the posthuman (which further disrupts the boundary between human and nonhuman), often surround their fear of the katabatic Other through the use of proximity. Badmington argues that the advent of posthumanism breaks down the boundaries set by Descartian anatomy and Cartesian dualism and responds to this through the creation of the alien Other.[12] As Veniss Underground interacts with many of the mainstays of posthumanism – such as the 'end of man'[13] and the disintegration of barriers between human, non-human, and animal – its connection to both the Other and the katabatic becomes inherent through the discussion of the protagonists' identities and the constructions of space. To posthuman thought, monsters 'undermine the taxonomies which secure the human as a biological and anatomical category,'[14] and the spaces of Veniss Underground do exactly this; the relationship between animal/monster and human is one of superiority on behalf of the former. Typically, the Otherness of monsters lies in their hybridity which sees them placed 'outside of a rationally agreed taxonomy; they are uncategorisable in any meaningful order'.[15] However, for the posthuman world of Veniss, there is a decidedly recognisable order, albeit sinuous and twisted in appearance, and it is only when this order is undermined through the revelatory travels of the protagonists that the monstrous nature of their surroundings and fellow inhabitants are brought to the forefront. The novel's hellspace is the battleground through which the monstrous is found to be mostly human.

VanderMeer's novel is primarily concerned with the separation of the self and the Other through the delineation of its spaces and the disintegration of the selves that reside within them; Veniss, a futuristic, skyscraper filled city, rests above Veniss Underground, a realm – as the name suggests – below that houses all manner of monstrous denizens that are both human and non-human, and sometimes in between. It is a work consisting entirely of constructed domains all owned by one entity or another and all inhabited by a certain characteristic of individual – individuals who are, notably, also constructed. Nicholas and Nicola were birthed from a synthetic womb, raised by the novel's resident Hades and god-like creator, Quin, and exist primarily in the city of Veniss before the events of the novel take place. Shadrach – named so after the biblical figure in the Book of Daniel – grew up in the monstrous underground realm of the Other and acts as one of the many bridges between the concepts and beings of monster and human in the novel. They each undertake a katabatic quest that sees them come into contact with the monstrous realm and the monsters within, all overseen and apparently influenced by Quin, a figure who emblematises this dynamic. For novels such as *Veniss Underground*, and other

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[12] Neil Badmington, Alien Chic: *Posthumanism and the Other Within* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 3-8.

[13] Edgar Landgraf, Gabriel Trop, 'Introduction: Posthumanism after Kant' in *Posthumanism in the Age of Humanism: Mind, Matter, and the Life Sciences after Kant,* ed. by Edgar Landgraf, Gabriel Trop, Leif Weatherby (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), p. 1.

[14] Debra Shaw, *Posthuman Urbanism: Mapping Bodies in Contemporary Space* (London: Rowman and Littlefield Ltd., 2018), p. 52.

[15] Ibid., p. 24.

postmodern or posthuman narratives, the boundaries that separate the monstrous from the human are broken down to an extent that disintegrates the very definition of human, and the monstrous must take on a new form. Within *Veniss Underground* is a plethora of contained spaces, all of which house human horrors. The most important of these is Veniss Underground itself, a realm which lies directly beneath the city proper made up of varying striated parts, a labyrinth of downward, circling hellspaces akin to Dante's *Inferno*. The underground space of the labyrinth has always been one mythologically associated with monstrous othering.[16] European folklore specifically tells of a world beneath the ground 'peopled by demons and monsters,'[17] one which is clearly separated from the real, above ground world inhabited by the non-Other, non-monstrous human population. It is a diaphanous cultural link to classical katabasis, however the overall significance and representation of Hell in modernity is one that categorises a space as able to hold a plethora of mythological and folkloric values while still entrenching itself within the novel's own generic standing. For *Veniss Underground*, the solidity with which the underground space is connected to Hell is supported not only by the mythological retelling of Orpheus and Eurydice, but by the more modern depiction of Hell as a place of monstrous sinners and demons, ruled over by its requisite overlord.

The underground has 'long possessed an unsurpassed power to evoke the negation of whatever has been defined as normal and belonging to the world above';[18] it is the ultimate space in which to contain the katabatic and monstrous Other, as it has always been so far from the known and quantifiable. Pike notes that this position has still largely been maintained even with the advent of industrialisation, which trends towards the demystification of the underground in contemporary literature through its continued exploration and exploitation (such as underground railroads).[19] For *Veniss Underground*, the intrinsic connection to the katabatic myth means that the underground maintains the same level of Otherness that it has historically been associated with, despite the city being a space of scientific and futuristic presentation. In general, Veniss Underground is categorised as a cordoned off space, accessible via manhole covers, holographic portals, and an area of monitored border control ensured to keep the unwanted denizens out of the city. It is a world of disgusting, maggoty darkness, described by Shadrach as a place which still haunts him even above level: '[he] still had nightmares about living underground with the mutties and the funny people, and the drip-drip-drip of water constantly invading the system'.[20] It is associated with the fear of both what lies within and what it will do to the self and the deeper one travels below ground, the more monstrous the surroundings and inhabitants become.[21] The first of these striated spaces

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[16] Alison Gazzard, 'Paths, Players, Places: Towards an Understanding of Mazes and Spaces in Videogames' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Hertfordshire, 2009), p. 21.

[17] Rhys Carpenter, *Folk Tale, Fiction and the Saga in the Homeric Epic*, p. 149.

[18] David Pike, *Metropolis on the Styx: The Underworlds of Modern Urban Culture, 1800-2001* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 1.

[19] Ibid., pp. 3-6.

[20] Jeff VanderMeer, *Veniss Underground* (London: Pan Books, 2017), p. 12.

[21] Ibid., p. 36.

that the novel explores is Quin's Shanghai Circus,[22] a laboratory-like area which is both part of the city of Veniss and its underground counterpart and is accessed by Nicholas at the beginning of his katabasis in Part 1 of the novel. It is the area that purportedly houses the mysterious figure of Quin. As a master of Living Art and a figure of otherworldliness and unequivocal katabatic Otherness, he is one of the novel's most mysterious aspects. No full description or information is provided about Quin, and no one knows 'anything concrete about [his] past.'[23] Why he rules Veniss and its underground counterpart from the darkness through the production of synthetic Ganesha and meerkats that will eventually overtake humanity is not a question that the novel ever answers. The space in which he first resides is already designated as a destination of katabatic quality and the unknown: 'I was determined to go down to Quin's Shanghai Circus (wherever that was)'.[24] By definition, and in a way that aligns the spaces more closely with its labyrinthine connection, the city is difficult to navigate. Quin's Shanghai Circus is an area only accessed via a 'holo', a technological portal that connects above and below ground.[25] The space is markedly separated from the known and comfortable world of Veniss proper, and upon an intrusion of this boundary Nicholas comes into contact with the monstrous katabatic Other in a moment that clearly brings to mind VanderMeer's own comments on Lovecraft and the monstrous gaze: 'The cages, the smell, made me none too curious – made me look straight ahead.'[26] VanderMeer redirects the gaze away from the horrific surrounding cages that house now-extinct animals in a way that forces both Nicholas and the reader to hyper-focus only on what lies right in front of them – that is, Quin. The presentation of Quin himself evokes his sense of other-worldly dominance: 'Quin's head was half in dark, half in the glow of the overhead light', forcing Nicholas to 'move forward, if only to glimpse Quin in the flesh, in his seat of power'.[27] The half-hidden truth is soon revealed to be a grotesque product of nightmares that provides the initial body horror element of the narrative; Quin is presented as being one with the counter-space of his laboratory, a piece of Living Art moulded into his surroundings, but the half-glow of the lights and Nicholas's overall hesitancy to describe him fully mean that no concrete image is provided. Both the space and Quin are one in their monstrosities and, having partially revealed himself, it is the last that we hear of Nicholas until he is discovered underground by Shadrach in Part 3.

The visceral body horror of *Veniss Underground* serves to further the notion that the human body is that which is most monstrous when accosted by the Other forces found on the katabatic journey. Reyes states that body horror's 'emphasis on supernatural elements and its celebration of the transmorphic capacities of the body are normally in

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[22] A possible reference to the Othering of Eastern culture in science fiction, as seen in George Yang, 'Orientalism, Cyberpunk 2077, and Yellow Peril in Science Fiction', *Wired,* 12 August 2020 <https://www.wired.com/story/orientalism-cyberpunk-2077-yellow-peril-science-fiction/> [Accessed 09/07/21].

[23] Ibid. p. 15.

[24] Ibid. p. 8.

[25] Ibid. pp. 13-14.

[26] Ibid. p. 18.

[27] Ibid. p. 18.

opposition to that of contemporary horror, which often depicts the body as a carnal prison,'[28] one which is transformed as a product of posthuman entrapment. Despite VanderMeer assuming the position that modern novels have moved past Lovecraft's diffidence and entire otherworldliness of its monsters, the gaze is largely utilised as another barrier between the self and the katabatic Other, one which protects the katabatant until the last moment. No space in *Veniss Underground* is more evocative of this dichotomy than the Cadaver Cathedral, a location accessed by Shadrach on his quest to save his past lover and Nicholas's twin, Nicola, a place which ironically performs unholy dissections and forcible organ donations to feed the demands of Quin and those who dwell in the city. Another area under Quin's control, it also utilises the power of sight to portray the monstrous. Before coming to the nave, Shadrach walks through dark tunnels filled with dismembered, living bodies, all seeking to reach out to him in the blackness.[29] Again, just as Nicholas focuses ahead on Quin, Shadrach concerns himself only with his destination and avoids looking at the monstrosities around him less they entice him in. The true nature of their surroundings is consistently kept just out of reach, a forced viewpoint that allows the question to be raised of what lies beyond. 'Row upon row of bodies' lie in the 'bewildering proliferation' of walls instead of saintly sculptures, and those bodies that are whole are more monstrous here than those missing multiple limbs,[30] their lack of deformity making them the abnormality. The bodies no longer of use lie in a 'writhing, seething pit of flesh' which Shadrach must access through another tunnel of limbs until he can find Nicola within.[31] The legs are 'a forest, a tangle from which he built a ladder, a bridge, to get to the top'.[32] Shadrach must drag a dismembered and disfigured Nicola from a mountain of flesh, her destined final resting place. It is a space constructed entirely of discarded, half-alive bodies and limbs, one which is simultaneously monstrous due to the people within and for them. The Cadaver Cathedral lies only on the fifth level of Veniss Underground. The only way from here is down, and Shadrach must embark on a twisted journey towards the centre of the labyrinth and the monster that lies within.

Deeper within Quin's Shanghai Circus lies the true extent of his world and an embodiment of the way in which space figures as monstrous in the novel. Just as Quin is a part of his own surroundings, so too are his surroundings made of his parts and the centre of his domain lies on and within the body of a giant leviathan. It lies at the epicentre of Veniss Underground, from which Quin 'rules the world...like a god',[33] a world in which others, those most human, do not belong. The meerkat who guides Shadrach underground tells him that 'Quin made everything, even the sea. This is his laboratory. This is his world. Not yours.'[34] Notably, the world *is* that of the meerkat, whose place as a synthesised, monstrous creation of Quin is solidified by his nature. Even the sea, however, is Other: it

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[28] Xavier Reyes, *Body Gothic: Corporeal Transgression in Contemporary Literature and Horror Film* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014), p. 57.
[29] VanderMeer, *Veniss*, p. 115.
[30] Ibid., p 118, p. 115.
[31] Ibid., p. 125, p. 127.
[32] Ibid., p 128.
[33] Ibid., p. 160.
[34] Ibid., p. 179.

is 'the mouth of a creature that holds Quin',[35] a space within a space, a creature within a creature, on top of which are fighting factions of his own creations vying for belonging and for the overtaking of their own world and the one above.[36] His Shanghai Circus visited by Nicholas is but a minuscule part of the entire whole, and the leviathan encompasses his whole world. If the leviathan were to close its mouth, that world would cease to exist and all of the creatures within it would be consumed. It is a world entirely dependent on its placement within the darkness; if light should ever fall on it, it would either 'shrivel and decay' or 'rise up to blot out the sun,'[37] an ending which, no matter which side it would fall on, would end in the disintegration of one of the main spaces. Quin is a being who encompasses all of his own monstrous creations, residing within the gullet of his beastly throne, but when he is finally revealed, the truth of the hidden gaze falls away. Rather than a giant emperor, Quin is but an amorphous ball of flesh, far smaller and more insignificant than his role allows.[38] The stripping away of barriers between the known and Other is almost disappointing, and the lack of clear gaze or ideas that lead up to this point are meant to set up the monstrous as more than it is finally revealed as. The ultimate monster and creator of monsters is perfectly underwhelming but his actions have paved the way for a new product of his monstrosity, which will be revealed through the identities of the three protagonists.

Veniss Underground is a novel of three parts, a trilogy of protagonists and selves and spaces; the concept of the self in connection to the body and the spaces that it occupies vitalises the presence of a trilogy between Nicola, Nicholas, and Shadrach. The protagonists' sense of self is defined through their linearity to spaces and the representation of the city, underground, and the between. A second self, however, exists within Nicholas and Nicola, through which arises the notion of the katabatic Other in connection to duality with another physical self – one that is not particularly monstrous, but is presented as such through their own mirrored bodily disintegrations. For *Veniss*, the dual 'katabatic self' is discoursed through the motif of mirrors and the presence of this twinship. If the Other/katabatic self becomes a parallel to the protagonist and a representation of what they have become during and after their underworld journey then, for VanderMeer's novel, the 'katabatic self' already exists in certain terms. The separation usually occurs in the form of a different self envisioned by the protagonist – often accompanied by a narrative of lost mental stability – that replaces their previous identity before the start of the katabatic journey. It is a self that is derived directly from their confrontation with the monstrous, katabatic Other that presents them as always having been this Other.

The shared, symbiotic consciousness between Nicola and Nicholas – *'two as one'*[39] – is the ideal presentation of this dynamic. Pertinently, the double has been associated with an interaction between the self and the Other that is, upon closer inspection, not Other and

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[35] Ibid., p. 186.
[36] Ibid., p. 201.
[37] Ibid., p. 191.
[38] Ibid., p. 207.
[39] Ibid., p. 76.

the model of the twin is the ideal pairing to explore this.[40] As Parrinder notes, the double is often reflected in the motif of the labyrinth.[41] Nicholas's and Nicola's own struggle against the monster at the centre – Quin – is extrapolated through their shared conjunction which serves only to Other themselves further from their known selves and each other. When Nicola visits Nicholas's apartment after his disappearance, she stares into the mirror and causes a hologram to double her reflection. This hologram, a double of a double, represents the fractured nature of Nicola's own sense of self and creates four Nicholases in Nicola's space. She remarks that she 'sees Nick in the frown'[42] that doubles and mirrors her twin on her own face. The Nicholas residing within Nicola seems 'more alive'[43] than Nicola's own self and they both see a more 'ghostly' Other that represents their twin who is paradoxically both a dead-end shadow and a betterment of themselves, a warning of what is to come. It is characteristic of the idea of the reflective image of the self and the struggle to contain a personal identity within the katabatic downfall: 'There is a shadow life here – you see it in mirrors, where your image does not quite match your form, your motions not quite synchronized with this *other*, this *other*'.[44] The doubled self creates an uncertainty in identity that the space of the City transposes onto the individual, and both Nicholas and Nicola struggle with their own identities throughout their respective parts of the novel as their realities are torn apart in favour of the katabatic narrative. Nicholas, having sacrificed his body to become another of Quin's Living Arts, laments to Shadrach in their meeting underground that he is 'a reflection of [his] own failure.'[45] The body that he now possesses, a gruesome struggling lump best kept away from the light, is a mirror of this Other self he saw reflected and wished never to become, a poor attempt at assimilating with Quin's creations and his own godly power. When he explains his actions against Nicola to Shadrach, he states that 'I killed *myself*. It was like looking in a mirror.'[46] Any action or harm that Nicholas takes against Nicola extends to himself and just as Nicola saw Nicholas in herself, so too does Shadrach see Nicholas in Nicola. He is unable to bring himself to harm Nicholas, despite the threat he poses, due to the similarities in appearance to his former lover. It is by Nicholas's own hand that he eventually perishes in a self-made suicide that sees him doubly kill his reflected and true self. Inbar Kaminsky notes the inherent uncanniness associated with both the novel's twinship and use of the 'you' pronoun in Part II: 'recognition of the *other* as *you* is at the heart of the experience of the uncanny.'[47] Nicola or the unknown 'you' is not simply the Other that is formed as part of the descent into Veniss; rather, it is another being entirely,

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[40] Katherine Burkham, *The Drama of the Double: Permeable Boundaries* (Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), p. 2.

[41] Rafail Nudelman 'Labyrinth, Double and Mask in the Science Fiction of Stanislaw Lem', in *Learning from Other Worlds: Estrangement, Cognition, and the Politics of Science Fiction and Utopia*, ed. by Patrick Parrinder (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), pp. 178-92 (p. 182).

[42] VanderMeer, *Veniss*, p. 27.

[43] Ibid., p. 27.

[44] Ibid., p. 39.

[45] Ibid., p. 156.

[46] Ibid., p. 159.

[47] Inbar Kaminsky, 'Urban Twinship: The Body of the Futuristic City in Jeff VanderMeer's *Veniss Underground*', in *Cityscapes of the Future: Urban Spaces in Science Fiction,* ed. by Yael Maurer and Meyrav Koren-Kuik (Leiden: Brill, 2018), pp. 13-27 (p. 20).

a personal identification and a physical form of the Other, which even here, during Nicholas's confession, cannot escape the confines of personal duality. Nicola's attempted murder by Nicholas's hand effectively becomes a suicide of the self by the Other, one that leads to her monstrosity and his downfall.

The mirrored narratological connections between Nicholas, Nicola, and Shadrach create a metaphorical tertiary bridge that sees the protagonists consociate not only with each other but the spaces around them. As such, they become representative of the very spaces they move around and between. Kaminsky states that the spaces of the city and the levels within it are 'examined in relation to their metaphorical function as an alternative body of the protagonists, who no longer view corporeality as a desirable means to exist and constantly seek to subvert it.'[48] The spaces of *Veniss Underground* are used as a way of subverting bodily desires and functions towards a more posthuman approach; the protagonists become fully connected to space itself in a way that provides a fluidity between the self, the body, and their occupied environment. The trilogy is compounded by the representation afforded to the spaces by the protagonists, and if the three main 'hellspaces' or realms can be categorised as: the City (demarcating any space above level), the Underground (the world of Veniss Underground itself, from first level below ground to the questionable end), and Between (Quin's Shanghai Circus, the leviathan body, and the idyllic white-bridged forest), then the trilogy is replicated neatly by Nicola, Shadrach, and Nicholas respectively. This diverges from Kaminsky's view of Nicholas representing above, Nicola below, and Shadrach between, and whilst this view serves a more posthuman reading of the novel, the approach of katabatising the trilogy and the narrative requires a different correlation – one that serves to highlight the monstrous nature of both self and space that has resided in the novel from the beginning, and is merely brought to light by their respective linear journeys.

Nicola, as a programmer of the free market who lives and works in the cityscape of Veniss proper, is the representative of above ground. When Nicola's part begins, she provides a clear description of the city free from Nicholas's wanton Living-Art-speech tendencies; a striated, vertically linear city surrounded by a two-hundred-foot, mile deep border. Even Veniss itself, with its darkened city walls and skyscrapers, is connected to twinship: 'you thought you could discern the faded, distant twinkle of Balthakazar, sister city'.[49] If twinship is compounded by both places and people, then it is further consolidated by the connection between the self and a cityspace. Nicola is a fully assimilated participant in life above level, and to her the chaos of the city where her twin resides is 'so methodical, so rational'.[50] The stability she has in the above-level city is represented through her literal position above the rest of the city's geography and her tendency to occupy high level spaces signifies her own awareness. Her own apartment is high above the city and she similarly occupies the 120th floor of the Bastion. Nicola is able to splice and rewrite a world of her own – 'You love this abstract world that impinges so heavily upon the

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48 Ibid., p. 14.
49 VanderMeer, *Veniss*, p. 26.
50 Ibid., p. 27.

concrete world'[51] – in a way that perceivably links her to Quin's own real methods of creation. She 'hardly knew there was a tenth level below ground'[52] and her entire corpus of spatial knowledge is delegated to the city of Veniss itself. When Nicola meets Shadrach, the two levels of the city collide in a way that sees them both be referred to as twins separated for too long, two halves of a spatial whole – Veniss and Veniss Underground – with a shared sense of spatial identity and awareness. They are a levelled antithesis of each other: 'You knew the city and he did not […] Your knowledge and sophistication. His strangeness, his stories about a place that seemed fantastical, impossible, unreal'.[53] She has a degree of awareness and control over her actions within the city proper but when faced with the prospect of entering a different hellspace, she panics: 'What lies beyond the door is also beyond your control'.[54] When faced with a space she cannot reasonably map out, her sense of mental and physical stability is lost. Her shaking hands represent the first stage of her body's dissimilation and, as the narrative moves on, she loses the corporeality afforded to her through her concrete knowledge of above ground, which is slowly being chipped away by the presence of the between space and her lover's association with below level.

As Shadrach learns to navigate Veniss, he gains 'a distinct advantage over [Nicola], who had never needed mastery to make the city work'.[55] Shadrach is somehow able to manage traversing a space that Nicola has lived in, possibly originated in, a space that for her required no guide other than her digitally controlled maps. His presence, and the descent of Nicholas into the underground that leads Nicola to abandon her stable earthly plane in search of him, sees her own navigational abilities subverted by a member of the underground. Their own realities are torn apart in favour of the katabatic narrative, and Nicola in particular suffers on this front. She is metaphorically fractured when her spatial knowledge and her identity associated with it is subverted by the presence of an in-between space and a deeper understanding for the incomprehensibilities of below level: 'You feel as if you have found a secret room in a house long familiar. Did you ever truly know this city?'[56] Not only is her world brought into question, but by not knowing the city she does not know herself. She rationalises her own experience by forcing herself to believe that the impossible are dreams and, in doing so, she gains a semblance of control over her slip. Nicola, through 'various programming projects, examined a thousand plans of the city [...] and yet never missed anything, never thought, *Here* is a gap.'[57] She is unaware of an absence that should be reflected in her anatomy: *'Something* has been deleted here. Never felt a corresponding emptiness in your heart'.[58] Her assumption that her body should have detected this strange city anomaly is only one of multiple instances where her physical form and the space she occupies are affected by each other. Once her

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[51] Ibid., p. 35.
[52] Ibid., p. 36.
[53] Ibid., p. 51.
[54] Ibid., p. 43.
[55] Ibid., p. 51.
[56] Ibid., p. 79.
[57] Ibid., p. 79.
[58] Ibid., p. 79.

awareness of the true geography of the city and its below counterparts is discovered, she finds it difficult to consolidate herself with her previous connection: 'you are waiting in a dream that is not your apartment. You are dreaming in a world that is not your world [...] this strangeness, this sense of oblivion'.[59] Nicola disconnects herself from the city that she is so inherently bound to once it is discovered as more than it presents, and her lived experiences are presented in the form of dreams as a way to cope. Shaw argues that 'the accepted cartographies of both bodies and cities are brought into doubt' when the criteria that distinguishes human, animal, and machine destabilise.[60] Here, Nicola struggles to quantify herself and the space around her when faced with the plans of Quin's synthetic creatures to overtake the world of humans. Her literal decompartmentalisation happens in the Cadaver Cathedral and, despite not being given a canonical description in the novel, her experiences are narrated by Shadrach afterwards. Loss of limb echoes loss of mind for Nicola and serves as a symbol for her un-belonging; where she resides in the mounted pool of dismembered body parts is the lowest point below level that she will reach, and for it she has been ruined. The connection between the body, the mind, and the spaces that they occupy is informed by an external and internal dynamic. A breaking of the soul – or in this case, identity – is essential to katabatic journeys.[61] Nicola's ordered, un-monstrous world has become entirely disordered, reflected in the fragmentation of her own body in a world where bodies are synthetically constructed. The future of her physical form is unknown; if, as the character of Lady Ellington, a woman who gains Nicola's lost body parts, is anything to go by, then Nicola may become further synthesised through splicing. Her transformation now sees her conform bodily to the looser constraints of the katabatic Other. For Nicola, there is a distinct absence of the human body, one which is deeply embedded in contemporary and posthuman thought and it is this very absence that causes her fragmentation.[62] The posthuman idea that 'initially focusing on the metamorphic potential of the body' leads to 'privileging the absence of the body'[63] sees Nicola forsake an essence of her humanity and identity to the monstrous. Her struggle to familiarise herself with the other levels represents her strict worldview and is likewise evident in the state she is found in below level, comatose and 'a step before death'.[64] Her part of the novel lends itself a certain lucidity, the 'you' a solid direction that, despite its impersonal impetus, provides stability that echoes her own relationship with the city proper. Once below level, however, this selfsame stability is lost, replaced by both a broken body and mind. Her section culminates in the ultimate destructive katabasis, and the only time she appears in the narrative again is through Shadrach's eyes. For her own personal narrative, the subsuming of her selfhood and the city is absolute and, upon the revelation of the monstrosity of the space, so too is her own monstrous form revealed, one with a fractured mind and a loss of limb and eye. By having the body so intrinsically

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[59] Ibid., p. 85.
[60] Shaw, *Posthuman Urbanism: Mapping Bodies in Contemporary Space,* p. 7.
[61] Raymond Clark, *Catabasis: Vergil and the Wisdom-Tradition* (Amsterdam: Gruner, 1979), p. 33.
[62] Susan Napier, *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p. 37.
[63] Ibid., p. 37.
[64] VanderMeer, *Veniss*, p. 140.

connected to the experience of inhabitation, Nicola has no choice but to become the novel's monstrous truth.

Nicholas, denizen of neither city state nor underground labyrinth, is an apt representation of the inherent connection between the self and space. He, like Quin, metaphorically incorporates his own body with the space he represents: the in-between. He is neither fully assimilated to above or below, and his own crisis of identity that sees him venture towards Quin and his created worlds is a culmination of his already fractured self into something completely Other. His eventual demise below level allows him to completely subsume himself as one of Quin's creations and as an embodiment of the very Living Art that he strives for. His complete sense of un-belonging allows him to find solace and compatibility in the synthetic world of Quin's visible imagination. Despite Kaminsky arguing that Nicholas is representative of above ground and Nicola of below, and whilst it is true that Nicholas's descriptions of the city, unlike his sister's, are entirely surface-level – 'the city is a cliche performed with cardboard and painted sparkly colors'[65] – any connection he has to the world above is negated at the very beginning through his desires of absorption into the Other. Considering his own designation in Veniss's Tolstoi district in comparison to Nicola's own high-rise apartment and workplace, his position accompanied by his own personal predicaments solidify his middling status in the katabatic model. The images of the city that Nicola is so inherently connected to 'had torn their way from [his] mind to the holo, forever lost',[66] and Nicholas's own impetus is present from the beginning. When he reaches Quin's Shanghai Circus, his self is effectively abandoned in the 'watchful "I"s of the purple-lit sign'.[67] Nicholas's section spans only seventeen pages and at the end of Part I his movements and whereabouts are unknown. When he resurfaces, he is a fractured version of the self that existed above ground; Shadrach 'r[uns] into the darkness' to find Nicholas, who has transformed into a grotesque, amorphous globule barely resembling his former self and body.[68] The 'trashfolk' of the underground dehumanise him and Other him in the very domain of the monstrous, and his complete absorption into the shadow partially merges him with below ground. The very nature of shadows, however, is their insubstantiality and non-corporeality. Despite his own desperate actions, he is still unable to fully become and assimilate with the space he occupies. He refuses to answer Shadrach's identifying question[69] and he becomes a ghost of his own self, one that exists in one space while the other part moves on: 'Nicholas sl[id] further down the wall, until he was sitting. And yet the shadow occupied the same space'.[70] Here, he twins Nicola, who begins feeling strange after she enters Veniss Underground (or the between) and returns as a shadowed version of herself, almost as though a part of their being is stuck in the space they previously occupied. He reaffirms this separated Other from his self; 'I'm not myself, Shad. I'm just

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[65] Ibid., p. 5.
[66] Ibid., p. 6.
[67] Ibid., p. 16.
[68] Ibid., p. 154.
[69] Ibid., p. 152.
[70] Ibid., p. 155.

not.'[71] Having gone further than Nicola in his own bodily transformation, he cannot come to terms with his complete Othering and both his mind and body battle for an impossible existence. Nicholas's own double suicide sees him kill the self he sees in Nicola and his own destroyed being when he jumps from the carriage of a train and plummets deeper below level. Out of the trilogy of protagonists, he is the most to suffer from his trip below ground. His body is the most transformed and destroyed; the extinction of the self and the body in this space is his only escape, and the only way to truly defeat the monstrous is through death.

As the final third, Shadrach represents the last of the spaces, that which encompasses below level. Just as Nicola associates with her sister-city of possible birth, so too does Shadrach become the companion of his own home. Raised in the rubble and ruin of the hellscape, he unmistakably associates, at least in katabatic terms, with Veniss Underground itself. Shadrach's connection to below level is brought up by Nicholas, who states that his ascent from underground to the Canal District of Veniss was like surfacing to a 'wall of light'.[72] No description is given as to the reasons that denizens of below level may choose to travel to or be allowed to enter the city of Veniss. The levels are not completely barred to each other and travel between is possible; there are no solid, impenetrable boundaries between the katabatic Other and the 'real', un-monstrous world. Shadrach is consistently able to travel between above level and below. As an intrusion in Veniss itself, he seeks solidarity in the love of Nicola, his above-world antithesis who will eventually lead him back underground. From his prior affiliation to the spaces below level, he is able to navigate but never actually succumb to the struggles that Nicola faces; effectively, he belongs there. His own ability to be able to navigate relatively unscathed, and for him to fully assimilate with life above level, come from a former understanding that is characteristically unkatabatic. In no Classical myth, and rarely in modern retellings, does the katabatant not only hail from the underground world but return there. For Shadrach, hell is personal, intrinsic to his own being and development. If Hell as a space firmly represents something that is not the self, somewhere the self does not belong, and Hell is denoted a specific function when named as such,[73] Shadrach becomes somewhat of an outlier. The Hell of *Veniss Underground*, at least for him, does not come from the space itself but the way in which the space serves as a threat to his lover. For Nicholas and Nicola, Veniss Underground is associated with hellspaces through their fear of the unknown, represented by their literal bodily and mental destruction. For Shadrach, Hell is home and, perhaps ironically, for the denizens of Veniss he is everything that signifies and symbolises the monstrous Other without physically appearing as such. On his own journey back below ground, Shadrach does not suffer the same physical collapse as his counterparts – though he does suffer in terms of both mental and physical exhaustion, there is no literal evisceration of his bodily self. At the end of the novel when Shadrach helps Nicola ascend towards the city of Veniss, Nicola grows stronger and Shadrach grows weaker: they have subsumed the city levels into their identity so

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[71] Ibid., p. 155.

[72] Ibid., p. 9.

[73] Falconer, *Hell in Contemporary Literature,* p. 18.

completely that only re-assimilation can reconvene their previous balance. Their complete Othering, however, means that this is impossible. In effect, the trilogy of protagonists all suffer from the same dissociation of the self in relation to the spaces that they occupy, each becoming their own form of the katabatic monstrous that directly aligns with their personal definitions and identified domains.

Veniss Underground informs a complex relationship between its protagonists and worlds, one which exposes the underbelly of monstrous, katabatic Otherness by bringing it to the surface. The katabatic Other has been revealed to be that which hides beneath, found within the narrative's Hellspace but not necessarily confined there throughout. The novel is a slow, agonising revelation of both Other self and Other space, and what hides in the darkness is both human and monster: 'I needed to strip away the darkness of a subterranean land', VanderMeer writes, to 'show, unflinchingly, what hid in that darkness.'[74] No longer is the monstrous delegated to the sidelines, a thing glimpsed from the corner of the eye, never truly revealed. Typically, the monstrous is further Othered and separated in its secrecy, mystified into the unknown and synthesised from the known. For *Veniss Underground*, however, the monstrous is brought to the surface both literally and metaphorically through the katabatic journey that is central to the narrative, along with its interactions with theories of Othering and posthumanism. No barriers exist between the real, above-world self and the horrific, hellish occupants below, and it is precisely this dynamic that corrupts the mind and body of the protagonists. Nicholas, Nicola, and Shadrach all suffer physically and mentally as part of their katabatic journeys and confrontation with the monstrous Other in a way that causes them to mirror their experiences. The world of Veniss and its surroundings is cruel and unforgiving and the humans that reside within are simply products of their environment, beings who are unable to fully come to terms with the reality of their situations. Effectively, this reality becomes unreal to them, a 'gossamer dream transforming itself into a nightmare' that sees them forsake themselves.[75] The confrontation of the self and the katabatic Other is disastrous, and leads to the novel's final warning; the real and the unreal have traded positions, and the barriers between known and Other have been torn apart. A katabatic journey must always culminate with an anabasis, an upward descent that allows the katabatant to return to their above-world surroundings having succeeded in their goal to vanquish the monster and gain their boon. Here, however, there is no such vanquishment. A broken Nicola and Shadrach surface in the city having moved 'from one darkness to another'[76] and break down in mourning over the loss of their former selves, having fully sacrificed their minds and bodies to the monsters below. Their grief is echoed in the revelation that the monster is in front of you, it *is* 'you', and it is a proclamation of a now unhidden reality that has been brought about by its reveal; a future in which the inhuman – in all of Quin's creations – overtakes all.

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[74] VanderMeer, *Veniss Underground*, p. 248.

[75] VanderMeer, *Veniss,* p. 106.

[76] Ibid., p. 226.

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Crackle

David Briggs

In memoriam Mark Fisher

Friday night. Mix Manhattans.
Put on the record I've bought.
    Bourbon, vermouth, Talking Heads –
    just three of many kindred pills
    and soft-edged analgesics
        I've come now to rely on.
Addict of the hi-fi,
    the gentle whump of needle
    touching down on sounding strip,
    vinyl's haunting crackle –
        sound of power cuts and post-punk,
        of trying out new hairstyles.

Why this melancholia
for the granular, analogue world?
    Is it that I'm haunted
        by the ghost of that utopia
        I'd been fool enough to think
        was almost in our grasp?
Once, it seemed, there'd be no end
to maintenance grants, free degrees,
    poets on Parkinson,
        public libraries.
And a better future beckoned –
    egalitarian technology,
        in every town a world-class orchestra,
            council homes to rival even
            Vienna's Wohnpark Alterlaa.
Before the demolition of the post-war high-rise dream.

A record's grooves fill with dust.
    When spun, its crackle makes
    the weather in a room.
Briefly, post-millennium, some bands, in post-production,
added crackle in the studio.
        Is it mere indulgence now

to slide one from its sleeve,
this liquorice-black flat earth
between forefinger and thumb?
Not everyone is casting wistful glances back.
Some things have improved.
Some ideas survive.

Marconi thought no sound was lost:
no word, no note, no scream.
That sound, once made, never dies,
just sinks beneath our human pitch –
the world, therefore, an echo vault
of ever-fainter soundwaves.
And he hoped one day to fashion
alchemical devices
able to re-amplify
these currently inaudible
yet stubborn sonic ghosts.
Marconi dreamed he'd one day hear
the actual voice of Jesus preach
the Sermon on the Mount.

Hard to lose anything now,
even if we want to.
Digital's made sure of that.
The only thing that we've lost's
the certainty of loss.
Unless we can be said to have lost what never existed,
be haunted by a might have been.
So I sometimes think.
Mr Analogue Nostalgia
living out my quaint routines –
crate-digging in record shops
on Fridays after work,
refusing still to use or own
a hashtag or a smartphone.
Between the needle landing
and the first track's opening bars …
as though the neoliberals hadn't won.
Each night, I put a record on.

Critical commentary

Building on a postulation from Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (1993), Mark Fisher describes hauntology – a near homophone for ontology – as 'the agency of the virtual'.[1] It concerns elements which are not supernatural, but which nonetheless act without existing. One of his examples is the 'spectre of Communism'[2] which Marx and Engels saw as haunting Europe, even though it had not yet become manifest in the way that it would during and after the Russian Revolution. A hauntological element, then, can be viewed as 'a virtuality whose threatened coming [is] already playing a part in undermining the present state of things'.[3]

Fisher is concerned with post-1945 British culture, and he focuses specifically on what he sees as the gradual but irremediable dismantling of the progressive popular modernity of the post-war settlement by successive neoliberal governments since 1979. The window of opportunity for more progressive social policy that opened during the 1950s-1970s was subsequently slammed shut during the apparent triumph of neoliberalism that led Francis Fukuyama to assert 'the end of history'.[4] But the optimism of that post-war period, however brief, informed the milieu in which Fisher's generation spent their childhoods, a milieu which encouraged them to imagine a utopian future of egalitarian technology, of liberation from labour and economic precarity. And yet this is a future very different from the one Fisher actually found himself inhabiting when writing *Ghosts of My Life* in the early 2010s. So, it's also possible to be haunted by the spectre of an imagined future that never came to be, to be spooked by a virtuality whose historically thwarted incipience now plays a part in undermining our acceptance of the present state of things.

The removal of central features in the progressive social policy of the post-war settlement – maintenance grants, social housing, low rents and protected tenancies – also exerts an effect on cultural production. Increasing precarity makes it ever more important for makers working in the arts to achieve economic security quickly, and this tends to result in a reliance on tried-and-tested formulaic tropes and methods. It leads to the production of that which one can be confident will sell, rather than to investment of time in the formal and structural experiments that characterised what Fisher regards as the more innovative popular Modernism of the 1960s-1980s. Writing of the process of marketisation in public service broadcasting from the 1990s onwards, he asserts:

> there was an increased tendency to turn out cultural productions that
> resembled what was already successful […] If there's one factor above

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[1] Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (Alresford: Zero Books, 2014), p. 18.

[2] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. Jeffrey C. Isaac (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 1.

[3] Fisher, p. 19.

[4] See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993).

> all else which contributes to cultural conservatism, it is the vast
> inflation of the cost of rent and mortgages.[5]

This cultural conservatism buttresses a position that Fredric Jameson refers to as the 'nostalgia mode',[6] a mode especially dominant in late twentieth and especially early twenty-first century Western culture. Mark Ronson's production of the Amy Winehouse single 'Valerie',[7] for example, employs modern studio technology to ape an idea of 1960s soul, resulting in a sound that belongs neither to the present nor to the past but to an implied timeless era, an idealised 1960s. This nostalgia mode in contemporary culture, a form of retromania, which can be seen everywhere – in fashion, in popular music, in the taste among well-heeled forty-somethings for mid-century Scandinavian furniture, in nostalgic tv dramas of the past twenty years – has resulted in a 'waning of historicity',[8] or dyschronia, which Fisher equates with the processes of late capitalism. The neoliberal destruction of a communitarian sense of solidarity, as well as of ordinary people's economic security, has led to a compensatory hungering for the well-established and the familiar. In other words, the future has been cancelled. Instead, we have the endless recycling and collage of old tropes.

Hauntological popular music is music suffused with an overwhelming melancholy, its principal sonic signature being crackle, the surface noise made by the dust in the grooves of a vinyl record, and which in the late 1990s to early 2000s was being added to tracks artificially, in the studio, by artists like Portishead and Burial. Crackle manifests as soundwaves, and as such it can be said to exist, whether its origin is dust or a digitally applied effect. But what it expresses, or activates, is a 'yearning for [an] older regime of materiality'.[9] In effect, it serves (for a certain generation) as a memory bridge to a pre-digital age in which the relentless march of neoliberalism seemed less certain and socio-economic conditions enabled a Modernist spirit of formal and structural experimentation in the arts on a more democratic scale. Did that regime actually exist as imagined? Is it merely a nostalgic projection? And does it matter if it is? For some, the very idea of that regime manifests like a ghost when they hear vinyl crackle – whether that's a digital sample or, as I tend to encounter it, when a stylus hits a record's groove – and this haunting keeps alive the possibility at least of an alternative to the present hegemony. It's a ghost that can act upon the subject without necessarily needing to exist. It is hauntological.

Fisher connects the hauntological melancholia of crackle to a Jungian notion of libido, and differentiates it from mourning. In mourning, libido is slowly and painfully withdrawn from the lost object, while in melancholia 'libido remains attached to what has disappeared'.[10] And may even, we should add, in reference to lost futures, remain attached to that which never existed. This is not the same as Jameson's nostalgia mode, though it is easy to see

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[5] Fisher, p. 15.
[6] Ibid., p. 11.
[7] Mark Ronson, *Version* (Columbia, 2007).
[8] Fisher, p. 14.
[9] Ibid., p. 21.
[10] Ibid., p. 22.

how it might be confused with it. The yearning is not so much for an aspect of form or style which may then be anachronistically revived in the present, but rather for a historical period whose conditions enabled a Modernist spirit of innovation and the generation of new forms appropriate to the given moment. The lost object for Fisher, the ghost by which he was haunted, was not an object, or an aspect of form or style, but a tendency he perceived in post-war culture towards an increasing democratisation of the (initially elitist) Modernist project: a tendency evident in social housing inspired by Le Corbusier's architecture; the BBC's Radiophonic Workshop; the *Play for Today*; Penguin paperbacks of Modernist thinkers; the music of punk and post-punk; etc. He was haunted by a vision of a future that might have been, by the ghosts of democratisation and pluralism, by a revenant loudly bemoaning the supplanting of bespoke artistic structures and devices suited to the zeitgeist by the appropriation of tropes from works of the past as part of a nakedly commercial agenda. It's a haunting which made Fisher feel alienated from the nostalgia mode in many of the cultural productions of his own time. But it's also a haunting he refused to exorcise, because to live with such ghosts is a form of resistance.

Proponents of postcritique will be sceptical about this reading of crackle. Rita Felski's examination of the limits of critique, for example, includes close consideration of the hermeneutic strategies of a left-leaning generation. Felski doesn't mention Fisher specifically, but she does discuss Fredric Jameson, approving his affirmation of a vibrant, long-lived tradition of Left utopian thought, but questioning its reliability, and dominance, as a critical stance. For if that buried, hidden meaning of a text which the critic disinters is revealed to be an anticipation and a confirmation of the tenets of Marxist thought, Felski suggests, then 'what a text ultimately portends is foretold by a prior theoretical-analytical scheme'.[11] In other words, the critic disinters symptoms of ideology. But isn't every critic, of whatever ideology, working to a prior scheme, whether consciously known or not? To accuse them of doing so feels a bit like accusing body-builders of having muscles.

Some might argue that aspects of cultural production have become more democratic and egalitarian during the last forty years, despite Fisher's trenchant criticisms of late capitalism. It would be instructive, for example, to survey a sample of artists and writers with a range of intersecting and overlapping social identities if they would rather be teleported back to the so-called progressive popular modernism of the 1960s and 1970s or continue to develop their careers in the present moment, despite the neoliberal hegemony. Ostensibly at least, not everything, including the attitudes and profiles of cultural gatekeepers, has got less progressive.

But this is an argument Fisher anticipates. Even if the period he is haunted by was not perfect, there is political gain in remembering a time when a more progressive future seemed possible. In his essay 'What is Hauntology?', he asserts:

> One of the futures that haunts those who count themselves progressive, then, is

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[11] Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), p. 64.

the possibility of a culture that could continue what had begun in post-war social democracy, but that could leave behind the sexism, racism, and homophobia which were so much a feature of the actual post-war period.[12]

If you spend as much time as I do nodding about in record-shops and listening to records on a hi-fi system, Fisher's examination of the hauntological can feel like the articulation of a distinctive emotional and intellectual feature of the midlife experience of people of his generation, a generation in which I loosely count myself, having been born four years later than him, in 1972. As the speaker of my poem acknowledges, by referring to himself with ironical deprecation in the third person as 'Mr Analogue Nostalgia', this fidelity to an older regime of materiality may look wilfully antiquated to some observers. Nonetheless, there's just 'something in this more / than natural'[13] whenever I hear that vinyl crackle between the needle landing and the opening bars. It's a conjuration. Enter a ghost.

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[12] Mark Fisher, 'What is Hauntology?', *Film Quarterly*, 66/1 (2012), 16-24 (p. 18).

[13] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins (London: Methuen, 2003), II. 2. 363-364.

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Monstrous Inheritance: Racialised Embodiment and Vampires in Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*

Vicki Silezin

In 1977, English novelist Angela Carter declared her writing to be 'a practice of *reading*, striving to destabilize Western hegemonic narratives from within' (original emphasis).[1] Indeed, many of her critics agree with this declaration, reading Carter's representations of transitional surgery (*The Passion of New Eve*), domestic servitude (*The Magic Toyshop*), and the coalescence of virginity, blood, pain, and sex (*The Bloody Chamber*) as powerful deconstructions of romanticised narratives surrounding conventional gender roles, capitalism, heteronormativity, and empire.[2] Yet there is one identity that is conspicuously absent from this list: race. Indeed, even when race shapes the lived experience of characters whose gender and sexuality come under the narrative microscope, narratives surrounding race have gone unobserved by both Carter's critics and by her texts. *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979) proffers some of the most poignant examples of this underexamined identity*,* despite being a collection of classic European fairy-tales retold through Gothic tropes that neither overtly deal with the entrenched prejudice of social institutions, nor cast explicitly dark-skinned characters. Instead, racial tensions emerge when Carter makes use of a narrative forged through a historic practice of racial othering: the vampire.

Of course, the Western narratives behind Carter's vampires have already been subject to critical attention; María del Mar Pérez-Gil, for instance, claims that Carter 'rewrites the figure of the female vampire into that of a prisoner in the Platonic cave' in *The Lady of the House of Love* by exaggerating the performance of femininity under the gaze of a patriarchal society.[3] Sarah Sceats, too, proposes that Carter 'us[es] vampiric tropes to examine gendered behaviour and heterosexual power relations'.[4] Through these critical lenses, Carter's representations of the vampire appear to be Feminist commentaries on traditionally Western narrative of heteronormativity and gender relations. But these criticisms overlook that the bodies of these tales are racialised; indeed, Carter's vampire stories feature bodies subject to anti-Semitic stereotypes and feudal serfdom, the latter

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[1] Angela Carter, *The Passion of New Eve* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1977); Carter, *The Magic Toyshop* (London: W. Heinemann Ltd., 1967); Carter, *The Bloody Chamber*, intro. by Helen Simpson (London: Vintage, 2006); Carter, quoted in Kari Jegerstedt, 'The Art of Speculation: Allegory and Parody as Critical Reading Strategies in *The Passion of New Eve'*, in *Angela Carter: New Critical Readings*, ed. by Sonya Andermahr and Lawrence Phillips (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), pp. 130-146, p. 131.

[2] Linden Peach, *Angela Carter*, 2nd edn (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Sonya Andermahr, 'Contemporary Women's Writing: Carter's Literary Legacy', in *Angela Carter: New Critical Readings,* pp. 11-21.

[3] María del Mar Pérez-Gil, 'A Vampire in Plato's Cave: Mimesis, Anamorphosis, and Simulacra in Angela Carter's "The Lady of the House of Love"', *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction,* 5. 57 (2016), 512-520 (p. 513).

[4] Sarah Sceats, 'Oral Sex: Vampiric Transgression and the Writing of Angela Carter', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 1. 20 (2001), 107-121 (p. 108).

a system whose phenomenology resembles the experiences of black women under chattel slavery, and thus represents a broad portrait of racialised womanhood. In order to destabilise all of the Western narratives entrenched in Carter's writing, it is therefore necessary to expand critical attention into an intersectional framework that interrogates the racial aspects of Carter's vampires in tandem with their gendered and sexualised behaviours. Beginning by summarising the history of vampire lore, I establish the prejudicial roots of this mythology before looking to *The Lady of the House of Love* to explore how they surface in Carter's writing. I then turn to *Wolf-Alice*, a werewolf narrative that features a secondary vampiric character, to establish these tropes as a feature of vampire lore and not just vampire texts. Throughout, I draw on the research of Erik Butler on the racial origins of vampire mythology and Hazel Carby's seminal work on the racialised reading of black women's bodies under the conditions of slavery; although, of course, this is not an equivocation of black and Jewish experiences but merely an acknowledgement of the resemblance between the experiences of racist structures and physical stereotyping.[5] I thus draw attention to the racial subtexts that are present in Carter's representations of the vampire; subtexts that are likely by-products of reproducing myths with such long histories rather than conscious choices. Nevertheless, I explore how leaving such myths unchallenged means that *The Bloody Chamber* participates in the Orientalist tradition of othering Eastern peoples through literature and mass media, thus ensuring the longevity of jingoistic stereotypes in the Western zeitgeist.[6]

The History of the Vampire

As Erik Butler covers in his book *Metamorphoses of the Vampire in Literature and Film*, the first public mass hysteria surrounding the vampire emerged in eighteenth-century Serbia during periods of mass upheaval.[7] These were shifts in the country's religious life, geographical borders, or political alliances; frequent events for a state trapped between Eastern and Western Europe, neighbouring both Christian and Islamic countries, and periodically occupied by the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires. Consequently, the Serbian population's cultural and racial allegiances were consistently under threat and, amidst these overwhelming changes, pinpointing a singular threatening body – specifically an undead body risen from the grave to commit brutal murders – eased a population's feeling of helplessness by identifying a tangible threat. A town's populace could thus close ranks against the suspected predator to perform what Butler calls a 'ritual of collective violence' against the alleged vampire, purging their community of a perceived infection and preserving the status quo in the process.[8] But while the social changes in Serbia were commonly sparked by political conflicts or modernisation on a national scale, by casting the vampire as an infiltrator the original myth created an us-vs.-them dynamic that easily

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[5] Hazel V. Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

[6] Vincent B. Leitch, 'Introduction to Theory and Criticism' in *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* ed. by Vincent B. Leitch et al. (London: Norton, 2001), pp. 1-28 (p. 25); Edward Said, 'Orientalism' in *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* ed. by Vincent B. Leitch et al. (London: Norton, 2001) pp. 1991-2011.

[7] Erik Butler, *Metamorphoses of the Vampire in Literature and Film: Cultural Transformations in Europe, 1732-1933* (Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 2013).

[8] Ibid., pp. 38, 33.

leant itself to racial prejudice between peers. Accusations and purging rituals were thus most often cast in borderlands communities; areas that were more likely to experience an increased military presence or shifting territory lines and therefore an influx of foreign peoples.[9] In fact, the first recorded usage of the term vampire emerged from a moment of cultural and linguistic incomprehension when an Austrian army medic penned a report in German on the actions of the hajduks (Serbian peasant-soldiers) under his supervision. The Serbs had reportedly 'exhumed a corpse, transfixed it with a stake, and burned it to ashes', believing that the deceased had risen from his grave and attempted to kill some of the troops and calling him vampyri.[10] The first time the word vampire was recorded was thus by an Austrian soldier writing in German while interpreting a Serbian word and folklore, encapsulating the entanglement of this mythical being with racial tensions at its very root.

This incident set the tone for a subsequent history of alleged vampirism. At first, Serbs proclaimed Turko-Serbian areas to belong to vampyri as political alliances shifted; then, as the vampire became a staple of Gothic literature and film, imperial powers like Britain, France, and the United States began to use the vampiric body to reflect their own cultural anxieties.[11] Victorian fears of reverse colonisation and degeneration, for instance, were embodied in Bram Stoker's seminal novel, *Dracula* (1897) the titular Count is, after all, a bestial, parasitic invader from Transylvania (modern day Romania) who feeds on the English population.[12] The devastation of the twentieth century's World Wars also developed what Butler calls the '"German" tinge' that characterised the vampiric body during the occupation of Serbia by German-speaking countries; and Bela Lugosi's Slavic Count in the classic Hollywood adaptation of *Dracula* was particularly unnerving upon release because of American anxieties around emerging from isolationism in the 1930s.[13] Through both oral legend and literary accounts, the vampire has thus consistently been cast as an unfamiliar and uncanny threat; to use Butler's apt phrase, Western art has repeatedly presented the vampire as 'something that comes from the East'.[14] And it is not only Eastern European identities that have been enmeshed with this figure of parasitic violence; once Jewish and Gentile communities began to mix in the nineteenth century, Jewish migrants also became common targets for Western Europeans looking for an outsider to revile, a trend that was exacerbated by rumours of Jewish blood libel (the unsubstantiated belief that Jews would slaughter Christians in a sacrificial rite). Already

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[9] Ibid., p. 38.

[10] Ibid., p. 27.

[11] Ibid., pp. 27-51.

[12] Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, (London: Archibald Constable & Co., 1897). Many critics explore the reading of Stoker's *Dracula* as an example of reverse colonisation. For examples, see: Gustavo Generani, 'Bram Stoker's *Dracula*: Breaking the Imperial-Anthropological Time', *Horror Studies* 1, 9, (2018), 119-139; Hannah Ewence, 'Blurring the Boundaries of Difference: *Dracula,* the Empire, and "the Jew"', *Jewish Culture and History*, 1-2, 12, (2010), 213-222; Stephen D. Arata, 'The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization', *Victorian Studies*, 4, 33, (1990), 621-645.

[13] Erik Butler, 'Vampires in Weimar: Shades of History' in *Metamorphoses of the Vampire in Literature and Film: Cultural Transformations in Europe, 1732-1933,* pp. 152-176; Misha Kavka, 'The Gothic on Screen' in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* ed. by Jerrold E. Hogle, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 209-228, (p. 212); *Dracula,* dir. by Tod Browning (Universal Pictures, 1931).

[14] Erik Butler, p. 46.

associated with disturbing blood-related practices and originating from even further East than Austria and Serbia, the Jewish community was thus primed to be cast in the role of the vampire in the collective consciousness of Victorian Europe – and, indeed, *Dracula* is abundant with anti-Semitic stereotypes. Furthermore, Lugosi's costume in the 1931 film perpetuates the anti-Semitic element of the classic vampire by including a parodically oversized Star of David, accentuating what exists in Stoker's text as marginally more subtle stereotypes that have led Judith Halberstam to proclaim that the Count 'resemble[s] stereotypical anti-Semitic nineteenth-century representations of the Jew'.[15] Both the original mythology and the Stokerisms that form the modern concept of vampirism are therefore the product of, and a vehicle for, anti-Semitism and xenophobia.

It is necessary to note this history before looking to Carter's text in order to fully comprehend the narratives an author engages with when reproducing vampire myth (although there are of course vampires in modern fiction that exist with several degrees of separation from the race relations of this history, or that actively create new mythology to combat them – Octavia Butler's *Fledgling* is a good example).[16] Once familiar with these aspects of vampire mythology, it becomes evident that Carter's representation of vampires as Eastern monsters in her modern retellings perpetuates the kind of Western hegemonic narratives she claims to critique. The presence of this classic mythology in *The Bloody Chamber* must therefore be interrogated to deconstruct the racial narratives embedded in Carter's writing, and to achieve a comprehensive deconstruction of Western thought that extends to the marginalised bodies of these texts.

The Lady of the House of Love

Carter's most extensive coverage of vampire mythology in *The Bloody Chamber* is *The Lady of the House of Love*, a Gothic rebranding of Sleeping Beauty that depicts an aristocratic vampire as she attempts to feed on a passing Englishman through a strict regimen of inherited rituals. Although this predatory characterisation means that she forms a rather unconventional heroine, Carter's protagonist is an archetypal vampire; a Countess inhabiting a deserted Romanian village and a direct descendant of Vlad the Impaler (the likely inspiration behind Stoker's Count), she and Dracula are almost explicitly kin.[17] Like Dracula she is also nocturnal, sleeping in a coffin during the day and hunting in the local village at night. She also cannot look at her own reflection, employing a servant with specific instructions to keep mirrors away from her – a duty that Dracula himself takes on by smashing Jonathan's shaving glass in Stoker's text.[18] Moreover, the Countess inhabits a derelict château furnished with lavish fabrics like velvet, silk, plush, and ebony that are infested with 'rot and fungus everywhere', not unlike the 'costliest and most beautiful fabrics' that furnish Dracula's Transylvanian castle while moth-eaten and coated

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[15] Judith Halberstam, 'Technologies of Monstrosity', *Victorian Studies*, 3. 36 (1993), 333-352 (p. 333).

[16] Octavia E. Butler, *Fledgling* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2005).

[17] Thomas Jesús Garza, 'From Russia with Blood: Imagining the Vampire in Contemporary Russian Popular Culture', in *The Universal Vampire: Origins and Evolution of a Legend,* ed. by Barbara Brodman and James E. Doan (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2013), pp. 195-207 (p. 195).

[18] Carter, *The Lady of the House of Love*, p. 110; Stoker, p. 26.

in dust.[19] And, finally, she possesses 'the fangs and talons of a beast of prey', features shared by the bats and wolves into which Dracula transforms throughout his narrative.[20] An undoubtedly Stokerian vampire, Carter's Countess is thus a product of the same anti-Slavic, anti-Semitic history that backgrounds *Dracula*. Furthermore, the Countess is directly linked to the original Serbian myth as her Romanian citizenship renders her a citizen of a country that was once part of the Ottoman Empire. She is also unceasingly under scrutiny by both the narrator and the English tourist, her life a local myth that inspires an entire village population to abandon their homes; and, like the hajduks, her gazed-upon body produces tales of vacated coffins and murdered locals, even if in the form of coffin-beds and hunted rabbits. The last of her family tree sitting 'all alone in her dark, high house' and speaking only French, an adopted language that creates the same linguistic dislocation as the medic's German did in Serbia, Carter's Countess is even an outsider in the local community.[21] Physically and linguistically estranged from her fellow countrymen, to both the hajduks of the Serbian borderlands and the modern, post-*Dracula* audience she therefore fits the social and ethnic classifications of the vampire perfectly.

But it is not merely the Countess's relation to this history that makes her worthy of note in this study; what makes it essential to observe these narratives is that they manifest in Carter's story in many of the same ways that they do in notorious caricatures of the Jewish population. Indeed, Carter's protagonist is subject to the same racialised formulation as Count Dracula that Halberstam highlights. In her analysis, Halberstam reads the seminal vampire against famous anti-Semitic portraits – like the mesmerist Svengali in George du Maurier's *Trilby* (1894) and Fagin, the miserly villain of Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (1838) – by drawing a correlation between the physiological constitutions of their bodies, predominantly their hands, eyes, hair, and build.[22] Du Maurier presents a villain of 'long, lean' stature, for instance, so much so that he is first introduced as 'a stick', and Dracula, too, is repeatedly described as a 'tall, thin man' by multiple narrators.[23] They all also display abhorrent features, from the Count's nauseating breath to Svengali's brown teeth and matted hair, and Fagin's 'repulsive face', while the latter displays 'a withered old claw' comparable to the Count's hairy, taloned hands and all three exhibit a piercing stare that render its subject transfixed and unnerved.[24] The literary anti-Semitic body is therefore one of simultaneous fascination and repulsion, human monstrosity, and visible sickliness – du Maurier encapsulates the physical constitution of this body when he dubs Svengali 'haunting' and 'uncanny'. It is therefore conspicuous that the Countess appears to have inherited all these traits as well as her land and titles; she shares the 'long sharp fingernails […] pared to a fine point' of her Transylvanian ancestor, for instance, features that are

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[19] Carter, pp. 107-108; Stoker, p. 20.
[20] Carter, p. 121.
[21] Ibid., pp. 109, 107, 116.
[22] Halberstam, 333-352 (p. 338); George du Maurier, *Trilby* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1894); Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (London: Richard Bentley, 1838).
[23] Stoker, pp. 13, 18, 74, 75, 120, 149, 241, 245, 271.
[24] Du Maurier, p. 108.

described as 'claws' by the Englishman in a phrase that aligns her with Dickens's Fagin.[25] Carter also depicts her as 'so thin, so frail', mothlike in her mother's voluminous bridal gown and thus in possession of the same lanky stature as the aforementioned men.[26] Further still, the Englishman describes her as 'yellowed', giving her a similar discolouration to Svengali's teeth; and, like Svengali's piercing stare, the Countess's 'huge dark eyes' feature heavily in both the narrator's and the Englishman's descriptions, tending to 'enlarge and grow' while hunting and assuming a 'waiflike, lost look' when standing before the Englishman.[27] The Countess even exhibits the same element of the grotesque, possessing an 'extraordinarily fleshy mouth[…] of a vibrant purplish-crimson' that renders the Englishman 'disturbed, almost repelled', and her resemblance to a 'ventriloquist's doll' or 'an automaton' with a 'curiously disembodied' voice aligns her with Olympia, the automaton used as an exemplar for the inhuman-human in Freud's essay 'The Uncanny'.[28] Particularly when viewed through the eyes of the Englishman, the bodily appearance of the Countess thus corresponds with many of the tropes of anti-Semitism. Just as the Countess 'helplessly perpetuates her ancestral crimes' so too does Carter, maintaining the Slavic racialisation of the vampire body and thereby perpetuating a harmful Western narrative of an inherently monstrous Semitic body.[29]

Naturally, this resemblance has ramifications for the other ways in which the Countess's form is discussed. As the close resemblance between the Countess and Dracula, Fagin, and Svengali make her legibly Jewish or, rather, legible as the anti-Semite's Jew, the Englishman's assumptive diagnoses of her body with 'a malarial agitation of the bones', 'fever-hot hands', and a consumptive appearance thus carry a history of pathologising the Jewish body as inherently sickly.[30] Labelled as perpetual migrants with no 'allegiance to a Fatherland', throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Jewish people were viewed as foreign bodies who fed on the resources of a host nation and spread disease throughout migrant towns.[31] Particularly in the late Victorian period, Jews were widely associated with body odour as a sign of ill-health and, in 1890s London, the spread of syphilis.[32] According to Sander Gilman's *The Jew's Body,* anti-Semites have also historically claimed that neurosis, hysteria, epilepsy, insanity, and somnambulism are prevalent in the Jewish community as a result of racial degeneration, 'bad blood', and a history of inbreeding.[33] This is where Carter's Countess is perhaps an even more egregious stereotype than Dracula; Halberstam argues that these medical tropes materialise sub-textually in Stoker's novel through the Count's alignment with the zoöphagous asylum

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[25] Carter, pp. 109, 120.

[26] Ibid., p. 116.

[27] Carter, pp. 116, 116, 110, 116.

[28] Ibid., pp. 116-7, 118; Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny', in *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism,* ed. by David Bevington, Lars Eagle, Katharine Eisaman Maus, and Eric Rasmussen (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002) pp. 929-951.

[29] Carter, p. 107.

[30] Ibid., pp. 117, 122, 117.

[31] Erik Butler, p. 43.

[32] Halberstam, 333-352 (p. 341).

[33] Ibid., pp. 337, 342; Sander L. Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991) cited in Halberstam, 333-352 (p. 341).

inmate Renfield, Dracula's tendency to wander from place to place in search for blood, and through the protagonists' attempts to exile the vampire for the good of the English national body.[34] But the Countess's health is even more prominent in Carter's text; she announces her own 'hereditary affliction of the eyes', a condition that the Englishman speculatively diagnoses as photophobia and that she inherits from ancestors portrayed with 'huge, demented eyes' in the portraits on her wall.[35] Not only does she adhere to the stereotype of hereditary illness, but Carter therefore also suggests that this ocular condition may be read as a mental health condition, multiplying the elements of stereotypical sickness visible in this singular detail. Carter then doubles down on this implication of hereditary insanity by periodically occupying the Countess's body with her ghostly ancestors who often 'peer out of the windows of her eyes' and plague her with inner voices so that she inhabits a somewhat schizophrenic existence that may be literally traced back to her relatives.[36] Such disturbances resurface throughout the text, mentioned at regular intervals through her 'nervously fluttering eyelids', 'habitual tormented somnambulism', or 'hysterical imperiousness' so that she is relentlessly plied with the same anxious neuroses prominent in anti-Jewish ideas.[37] There are therefore not just physiological anti-Semitic stereotypes visible in Carter's text, but also psychological tropes. The Englishman even declares her a 'victim of inbreeding', orphaned and left rootless in a house (notably not a home) and a community of which she is a pariah – after all, even the French she speaks is an 'adopted' language, pillaged from another land.[38] The Countess thus demonstrates how inextricable anti-Semitism remains from the portrait of the vampire.

The mere presence of these stereotypes is not an inherent endorsement on Carter's part; after all, it is necessary to set up established narratives in order to subvert them. In fact, it is precisely this method that makes *The Lady of the House of Love* a deconstructive commentary on gender according to Pérez-Gil: the breaking of sequence that kills the Countess also breaks the repetitive sequence of the fairy-tale and, in turn, the strict routine of feminine performance.[39] Indeed, the same could be said of sexuality here, as the Countess dons a wedding dress with all the conventional messaging of virginity and the heteronormative lifecycle only to consummate a predatory feeding ritual rather than a marital rite. However, unlike the Countess's gender and sexual identities, the racial tropes that characterise her body are not established to be dissembled; rather, in several places they are reinforced. For instance, when the English tourist considers her beauty to be unhealthy and hectic, he is echoing the narrator who declares the Countess's attractiveness 'unnatural', 'an abnormality', 'a deformity', and 'a symptom of her disorder'.[40] Here then, the narrator corroborates the conception of vampirism as a disease and pathologises her natural body, endorsing the sickly stereotypes projected onto

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[34] Halberstam 333-352 (p. 343); Stoker, p. 64.
[35] Carter, pp. 118, 124, 118.
[36] Ibid., p. 119.
[37] Carter, pp. 112, 122.
[38] Ibid. pp. 118, 120.
[39] Pérez-Gil, 512-520.
[40] Carter, pp. 117, 108.

Carter's protagonist. Moreover, before the Englishman even arrives at the Romanian village the narrator establishes that the Countess's ghostly ancestors 'torment pubescent girls with fainting fits, disorders of the blood, [and] diseases of the imagination', spreading ill health by their mere presence; the narrator thus confirms accusations that are identical to the ones faced by Jews in nineteenth-century London.[41] Carter's tale even ends with the saturation of the Englishman's military barracks with the 'reeling odour' of the souvenir rose he took from the Romanian chateau, a 'glowing, velvet, monstrous… corrupt, brilliant, baleful' flower that is 'plucked from between [the Countess's] thighs' and takes root in its new home after literally rising from the dead.[42] The Countess thus leaves an inheritance that possesses her sickly beauty and that mimics the behaviours of the original vampyri, passing along the hereditary condition of vampirism through this 'dark, fanged' offspring.[43] This alone means that she participates in the generational transmission of disease that her ancestors did, and that anti-Semites attributed to the Jewish bloodline. But this souvenir also carries the implications of a sexually transmitted infection, particularly due to the labial appearance of the flower in question, the seduction that forms the focal point of the text, and the Englishman's ingestion of her blood when treating her wound from the broken glass of her spectacles (the exchange of blood has, of course, been the subject of public health anxieties from the miasma paradigm of the early nineteenth century through to the HIV/AIDS pandemic of the 1980s-90s).[44] Subject to the same narrative of sex and infection as those accused of spreading syphilis in the 1890s – down to the English identity of the affected population – the Countess is thus styled through the visual archetypes of classic anti-Semitism while being cast in a sickly and infectious body, and as a threat to the health of England. While this ending may be liberating in terms of gender norms, whether, as Michelle Buchel argues, because it allows the Countess to escape the Englishman's desire to mould her into a traditional wife, or, as Pérez-Gil claims, because it breaks down 'the sequence of specular repetitions' that make up conventional femininity, when it comes to race it is a different story.[45] Instead of destabilising the image of the Slavic, Semitic, and sickly vampire body, Carter thus perpetuates these elements of the vampire myth: the satisfied note of the Countess's narration at the tale's end framing this as a victory for the fairy-tale woman while ignoring that it reinforces the specific oppression of racialised womanhood.

As previously mentioned, this oversight has ramifications outside of the Jewish woman's body, since many of the processes Carter subjects the Countess to resemble those outlined in Carby's *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*. It is imperative to reiterate here that the Countess's imprisonment in the House of Love is not the systemic oppression faced by black women; after all, Carter's Queen of the Vampires has the privilege of being a white European aristocrat, and white

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[41] Ibid., p. 109.
[42] Ibid., pp. 125, 124.
[43] Ibid., p. 124.
[44] Susan Sontag, *AIDS and its Metaphors* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), pp. 1-95.
[45] Michelle Buchel, 'The Fortunate Fall: Escape from the Realm of the Eternal Feminine in Angela Carter's "The Lady of the House of Love"', *English Academy Review,* 1. 21 (2004), 22-35 (p. 30); Pérez-Gil, 512-520 (p. 519).

women were often complicit in the oppression of enslaved women by aligning their interests with those of white slave-owning men – the Countess even enslaves her mute steward.[46] Yet many of the Countess's experiences – particularly the external perception of her body and others' attempts to change it – resemble those that controlled the lives of women trapped in enslavement. As I have already established, there is an undeniable racialisation that takes place when the Countess is dehumanised into a creature with fangs, talons, and claws. But this does not only absorb the vampire into a network of anti-Semitic portraits: it also resonates with the system Carby outlines of 'slavery as a brutal social system [that] often existed simultaneously with a rejection of the humanity of slaves as brute creatures.'[47] In this light, the Englishman's intentions to 'put her teeth into better shape', 'deal with her claws', and 'cure' her of her natural condition read as a form of jingoism, casting the Countess as uncivilised based on the specific physiognomy of her race.[48] Moreover, while declaring the Countess's mouth to be 'a whore's mouth', he likens her to the sex worker promised to him by his general, a 'naked girl upon a coffin' whose economic position means that she could not decline his sexual advances.[49] He thus reads the Countess's body as inherently and determinately sexual, a reading akin to the treatment of black enslaved women in Antebellum America who were considered 'neither pure nor virtuous', according to historian John Blassingame, because they existed in economic circumstances in which they were 'literally forced to offer themselves willingly'.[50] For enslaved women, sexual encounters were thus often compliance to the expectations of the enslaver, forming a system of institutionalised rape in which women were unable to decline their employer's advances.[51] And, indeed, the Countess is unable to say no, forced by the rituals she inherited from her predecessors to seduce her victim while wearing bridal lingerie; a compulsion enforced by the threat of death. Her demise, after all, is directly preceded by the disapproval of her ancestors as they 'turn away their eyes and grind their fangs' in disdain as the Englishman inverts the feeding ritual by sucking the blood from her glass-inflicted cut.[52] The Countess is thus forced to offer herself as a sexual lure by the lore of her race, a mythology policed by the panoptical portraits of her ancestors who act as overseers: her failure to meet their expectations leads directly to their wrathful punishment. She is even steered towards this ritual by the specific physiology of her race, her fine, white fangs framed as 'signs of [her] destiny' in an echo of the 'biological destiny' that defined black women as animalistically libidinous in the eyes of their enslavers.[53] The consummation ritual is therefore an act of compliance to the expectations of her masters and a fulfilment of her biological destiny; two crucial elements that make the Countess's experience resemble those of marginalised women within the slave trade (although I am by no means equating the experiences of the fictional Countess with the real enslaved black women of the American South).

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[46] Carby, p. 6; Carter, p. 109.

[47] Carby, p. 28.

[48] Carter, p. 124.

[49] Ibid., pp. 117, 122.

[50] John Blassingame, *The Slave Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 224.

[51] Ibid., p. 34.

[52] Carter, p. 123.

[53] Ibid., p. 109; Carby.,p. 24.

Dehumanised, sexualised, and violated by the system in which she exists, the Countess's narrative thus carries the history of the mythologised (and thus Othered) East while existing within the structures of the enslaving South.[54] And, just like the anti-Semitic tropes legible in her body, these structures are not established to be subverted; on the contrary, the Countess's failure to fulfil the exact expectations of the white man before her and her panoptical overseers results in the same response that many an overseer would inflict on a disobedient enslaved woman: she is punished by death. She is then posthumously sexualised as the narrative ends with the Countess's rose laid on a grave before infesting the Englishman's barracks, echoing the comparison of the Countess as the 'naked girl upon a coffin' who cannot refuse, and rendering the Countess's floral offspring as sexually objectified as the vampire – like the enslaved child, it 'follows in the condition of the mother'.[55] Biological destiny thus remains the central power in Carter's text until its very end, neither checked nor destabilised by the narrative so that the Englishman's dehumanising ideas are upheld. *The Lady of the House of Love* therefore displays experiences of racialised womanhood in a way that perpetuates the harmful narratives of the North Atlantic, ensuring their continued reproduction in modern literature and future iterations of vampire myth.

Wolf-Alice

The Lady of the House of Love is not alone in *The Bloody Chamber*; these racial narratives remain intact elsewhere, in more peripheral characters and in more cavalier usage of vampire mythology. This brings me to *Wolf-Alice*, a story tangentially related to the Little Red Riding Hood fairy-tale that portrays the life of a feral child raised by wolves as she learns to recognise human social cultures of clothing, hygiene, household chores, and structured time through her menstrual cycle. Within this Bildungsroman, Wolf-Alice is entrusted by a local convent to the care of a man called the Duke, a lycanthrope who possesses a castle and a notorious reputation for exhuming the dead and feeding on local villagers. In true fairy-tale form, the Duke is met with the conventional silver bullets of common werewolf mythology.[56] But he is also described using much of the lore surrounding vampirism:

> He carries on his frail shoulders a weird burden of fear; he is cast in the role of the corpse-eater, the body-snatcher who invades the last privacies of the dead. He is white as leprosy, with scrabbling fingernails, and nothing deters him. If you stuff a corpse with garlic, why, he only slavers at the treat: cadavre provençale. He will use the holy cross as a scratching post and crouch above the font to thirstily lap up holy water.[57]

Like *The Lady of the House of Love*, *Wolf-Alice* inherits from Stoker's creation in this passage the lore laid out specifically by Professor Van Helsing of garlic and Christian

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[54] Said, pp. 1991-2011.

[55] Carter, pp. 124, 122; Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (New York: Open Road Media, 2016), pp. 12, 39.

[56] Carter, *Wolf-Alice* (p. 147).

[57] Ibid., p. 142.

symbolism that have filtered into the general consensus on what constitutes a defence against a vampire. And this resemblance continues within the castle walls, as Carter's narrator repeatedly reminds the reader that the Duke has 'ceased to cast an image in the mirror' in the same fashion as both Count Dracula and the Romanian Countess.[58] In addition, while the Duke's hunting habits are determined by the lunar cycle in adherence to lycanthropic lore, the moon is credited as the 'overseer of somnambulists'; the Duke, then, is a sleepwalker, hunting at night and sleeping in the daytime in the same nocturnal pattern as Carter's classic vampire.[59] Moreover, the common associations between somnambulism and mesmerism (a Victorian precursor to modern hypnotism) attributes a trancelike state to the Duke akin to the daze that Dracula imbues in his vampire spawn, most notably in Lucy Westenra who is mesmerised into sleepwalking to the Count to offer her blood. Like the Countess, the Duke is thus framed as the direct offspring of Stoker's famous villain. This inheritance becomes only more apparent when the Duke's reflection also passes over the mirror 'like a wind on ice', mimicking the frigid temperatures of Dracula's skin, and in his aristocratic title as 'the lord of cobweb castle'.[60] Even the way he moves, 'scuttling along by the churchyard wall with half a juicy torso slung across his back', resembles the 'lizard fashion' in which Stoker's Count does when he 'crawl[s] down the castle wall'.[61] The Duke is therefore more vampire than werewolf, and a Stokeresque vampire at that; he is thus the product of the same history of the vampyri, including its history of racial othering.

It is therefore unsurprising that the Duke is subject to the same system of public speculation as the man suspected by the hajduks; he is explicitly 'cast in the role of the corpse-eater' by townspeople whose belief in the vampire is made explicit at the tale's end when they suspect that a young bride 'had come back to take matters into her own hands'.[62] Made into an archetype by the whispers of an insular, alienating community, the Duke is therefore more myth than man, his rumoured behaviours monopolising his identity; Wolf-Alice herself only sees his cannibal rituals at the very end of the tale.[63] Up until then, the only information about the Duke that Wolf-Alice – and therefore the reader – is privy to is mediated through the material residue of his hunts, the 'once-worn ball dresses […] shrouds, night-dresses and burial clothes' heaped in his wardrobes and behind mirrors, and through fictionalising phrases like 'they say you might easily find him […] scuttling along by the church wall' with his prey, framing the Duke's life as a Gothic fairy-tale within the Gothic fairy-tale of *Wolf-Alice*.[64] Furthermore, with his 'huge, inconsolable, rapacious eyes' and frail, leprous constitution the Duke displays the same anti-Semitic tropes as the Countess, and his decrepit castle even bears the same hallmarks of vamped wealth as he takes opulent materials like 'suave velvet' and 'abrasive lace' out of

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[58] Carter, p. 142.
[59] Ibid., p. 142.
[60] Ibid., pp. 145, 148.
[61] Ibid., p. 142; Stoker, pp. 33, 32.
[62] Carter, pp. 142, 148.
[63] Ibid., p. 148.
[64] Ibid., pp. 144, 142.

circulation only to leave them torn, crumpled, and dusty behind his furniture.[65] Gaunt, miserly, and wasteful, the Duke is thus drawn into the physiological and fiscal tropes of modern anti-Semitism as well as the rhetorical structures of the eighteenth-century vampyri. And, again as she does in *The Lady of the House of Love*, Carter does not establish these well-known narratives to destabilise them. Instead, the rumours of the Duke's parasitic feeding are corroborated when Wolf-Alice witnesses the Duke attempting his cannibalistic rituals in the village graveyard at the text's end.[66] Carter thus validates the rumour-mill of the townspeople and does so while going out of her way to align the lupine figure of the former with the anti-Semite's Jew. Far from destabilising this narrative-producing system that was founded upon racial alienation, through *Wolf-Alice* Carter chooses to prove it right, justifying the association between the anti-Semitic Jew's body and vampiric parasitism. No matter how central they are to the text, Carter's vampires thus ensure that anti-Semitism remains deeply entrenched in vampire mythology into its modern iterations.

Moreover, again like *The Lady of the House of Love*, *Wolf-Alice* contains the structures of slavery, meaning that this narrative speaks to a broader experience of racialised phenomenology. Indeed, narratives borne of chattel slavery manifest through the Duke and Wolf-Alice's relationship as landlord and housekeeper that carries several implications of the enslaved woman and her enslaver. This definition is technically correct, of course, as Wolf-Alice is not paid for her work; she sweeps up after the Duke's meals and makes his bed with no pay. But, perhaps more troublingly, Wolf-Alice does these things because '[she] knows no better than to do his chores for him', having been taught to perform these tasks by the nuns that took her in before entrusting her to the Duke's care.[67] Having been deposited on the castle's doorstep, she thus becomes a neglected and unpaid kitchen servant, performing tasks she was taught by older generations of women – with no agency over her life and conforming to domestic servitude, she goes through some of the formative processes of the enslaved young woman.[68] In addition, although less overt than the Englishman in the Countess's Romania, the nuns also exercise the same jingoistic attitudes as enslaving peoples of the American South by attempting to civilise her from what they call her 'natural state' into ladylike piety as self-professed saviours.[69] In fact, the very act of shipping Wolf-Alice from the convent to the Duke's castle embodies the attitude of many in Antebellum America who were ambivalent towards the enslaved community. People like plantation mistress Mary Boykin Chesnut who believed that it was easier for white Americans to treat black enslaved people well from a distance: '[p]eople can't love things dirty, ugly, and repulsive, simply because they ought to do so, but they can be good to them at a

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[65] Ibid., pp. 142, 146-7.
[66] Ibid., p. 148.
[67] Ibid., p. 143.
[68] Ibid., p. 141.
[69] Ibid., p. 141.

distance; that's easy.'[70] Indeed, to the nuns Wolf-Alice is a 'dirty, ugly' thing, an animal to be hosed off and domesticated, and to be ultimately passed along under the pretence of Christian mercy – to the nuns, she is easier to love at a distance. This kind of jingoistic language carries throughout the text; the tale's title establishes its protagonist as Wolf-Alice, not Alice, a title that qualifies its protagonist as somewhere between animal and woman; within the body of the text, the narrator then defines her through negation, declaring that '[n]othing about her is human except that she is *not* a wolf' (original emphasis) and that she is 'not wolf or woman'.[71] Like many enslaved women, Wolf-Alice is thus viewed by the white, Christian world around her as less-than-human, little different from animals; the same view of 'savage brutes' aimed at enslaved peoples in the United States. The Duke's castle is therefore a feudal space that turns Wolf-Alice from an uncultivated child into a woman suddenly defined by the economic circumstance and dehumanisation of enslavement.

While the plot of *Wolf-Alice* accentuates the performative nature of gender roles by making femininity a laboriously learned set of behaviours, the same cannot be said of Wolf-Alice's race. Indeed, the entanglement of Wolf-Alice's gender and class identities with her ethnicity comes to the forefront of Carter's text towards its end, when her narrator breaks from an otherwise contained narrative (aside from, of course, the subtextual reference to Little Red Riding Hood) to reference another novel when describing Wolf-Alice's gait: 'Her footprints on damp earth are beautiful and menacing as those Man Friday left'.[72] 'Man Friday' is a phrase first coined in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), used by its titular character to name the man who he enslaves after rescuing him from the cannibalistic natives on a Venezuelan island – a man whose ethnicity Crusoe describes in the following passage.[73]

> He was a comely, handsome fellow, perfectly well made, with straight, strong limbs, not too large; tall, and well-shaped; and, as I reckon, about twenty-six years of age. He had a very good countenance, not a fierce and surly aspect, but seemed to have something very manly in his face; and yet he had all the sweetness and softness of a European in his countenance, too, especially when he smiled. His hair was long and black, not curled like wool; his forehead very high and large; and a great vivacity and sparkling sharpness in his eyes. The colour of his skin was not quite black, but very tawny; and yet not an ugly, yellow, nauseous tawny, as the Brazilians and Virginians, and other natives of America are, but of a bright kind of a dun olive-colour, that had in it something very agreeable, though not very easy to describe. His face was round and

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[70] Mary Boykin Chesnut, *A Diary from Dixie*, ed. by Ben Ames Williams (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1949), p. 199.

[71] Carter, pp. 141, 143.

[72] Carter, p. 147.

[73] Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (New York: Open Road Media, 2014).

plump; his nose small, not flat, like the negroes; a very good mouth, thin lips, and his fine teeth well set, and as white as ivory.[74]

There is much to be said about the racial and jingoistic implications of this description, but it is sufficient for this study to take from it that Man Friday is a man of colour who is treated by those around him as if he is a piece of meat to be assessed – just as black enslaved women were 'handled and examined like cattle' according to Carby.[75] Like Wolf-Alice, Friday falls somewhere between human and animal, and is kept at a distance from Crusoe by this status as well as his commodification that aligns him more with animal materials than as a human being. Although Wolf-Alice is presumably Caucasian given the 'pale […] white' appearance of her reflection, this overt reference to Crusoe's servant and the resemblance between their treatment thus consolidates the resemblance of Wolf-Alice to an enslaved and racialised woman; and this reading has troubling consequences for the scenes that follow it.[76]

The intimate physical scene that ends this text, in which Wolf-Alice tends to an injured Duke in his bed while wearing a wedding gown in a scene not dissimilar to the Countess's unconventional consummation ritual, is thus coloured by this reference to Wolf-Alice as, essentially, the Duke's favourite slave. Indeed, although there is a maternal note to Wolf-Alice licking the Duke's face and 'snuffing at his wound that does not smell like her wound', a phrase used throughout to refer to the protagonist's genitals, the reader is reminded of the power imbalance of these characters as she does so under the watchful eye of the mirror – 'the master of the visible'.[77] This specific wording echoes the rhetoric of master and slave implied by the reference to Man Friday, bringing it to the surface of the text while also recreating the spatial arrangement of the Countess under her ancestral overseers. Consequently, this interaction carries the same connotations of compliance to a master as the Countess's inherited rituals, even though Wolf-Alice initiates this contact; after all, as an enslaved woman she is not in an economic or social position to give or deny consent. Furthermore, Carter positions this exchange at the end of her text; a narrative that tracks Wolf-Alice's natural progression into puberty and, ultimately, womanhood. She thus positions this intimacy between enslaved and enslaver at the apex of Wolf-Alice's pubescent transformation, implying that this moment is as inevitable as the monthly appearance of her menstrual blood. 'Biological destiny' is therefore as much of a powerful force in 'Wolf-Alice' as it is in the Countess's narrative, once again aligning the worlds of Carter's vampire stories with the experiences of black women in chattel slavery. Without the stylisation of Wolf-Alice as a 'Girl Friday', this ending could feasibly be read as an empowered woman taking agency over her own sexuality, a man accepting care from a female peer, and, even, replacing the archaic plundering of virginity that occurs in this collection's titular piece.[78] But by framing her protagonist's relationship with the Duke through systems and motifs of slavery, Carter ensures that this is not an exchange

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[74] Ibid., pp. 245-6.
[75] Carby, p. 38.
[76] Carter, p. 145.
[77] Carter, pp. 148, 149.
[78] *His Girl Friday,* dir. by Howard Hawks (California: Columbia Pictures, 1940).

between peers but an act that maintains the power structures of a racialised patriarchy. The vampire's castle thus perpetuates a system as racially potent as the original system that produced the vampyri – and, after all, the world of Wolf-Alice is not far away from the feudal system of eighteenth-century Europe. Not only is the Duke a product of the othering process of vampire lore, but his lifestyle also actively enforces racialised systems so that the vampire remains a figure complicit in the oppression of marginalised people.

Conclusion

By looking closely at Carter's contemporary adaptations of vampire lore, it is therefore possible to shine a light on the web of anti-Semitic and jingoistic perspectives that have been baked into the figure of the vampire ever since its emergence in literature in the 1700s. It is only by acknowledging the perpetuating presence of these harmful narratives that we can begin to destabilise this rhetoric and move towards a literary vampire that does not carry traces of anti-Semitism, nor feed into harmful sexual narratives of racialised womanhood – a crucial task at a time when racist violence and anti-Semitic thought are rife within political groups across Europe and the United States. *The Bloody Chamber* may thus serve as an invaluable text through which to consciously move away from these ideas into more ethical and intersectional representation in modern literature.

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'Some mercy shall lay victory asleep': De-villainising the Ottoman 'Other' in Thomas Goeffe's *The Raging Turk* (1618) and *The Courageous Turk* (1619)

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Abstract

Portrayals of Turks in early modern cultural discourses resisted historical accuracy: they are represented as violent, lustful, barbaric, and despotic despite the existence of numerous seventeenth-century Anglo-Ottoman correspondence documents in which Ottomans are often associated with wealth, military strength, and political efficiency. The stereotyped cultural Turk figure also affected the way dramatists portrayed Ottomans on stage. This very popular dramatic type is violent, lustful, and, as a result, politically corrupt and, thus, may have generally encouraged early modern resurgences of crusading rhetoric. Contrastingly, I explore how Thomas Goffe's more nuanced representations of Ottoman characters on stage in *The Raging Turk* (1618) and *The Courageous Turk* (1619) may be read as a response to negative culturally-influenced dramatic portrayals of Ottomans. Additionally, I argue that these newly emerging humanised portrayals of Ottoman characters on stage prompted the emergence of an anti-crusading discourse. This study meets a major need in the field of early modern English drama in identifying and exploring how the emergence of a new Turkish type on stage –aligned with an anti-crusading agenda – in the works of Goffe focuses on more nuanced portrayals of Ottomans whose violence is 'justified' by Ottoman law. This, in turn, encourages his audience to consider the political structures under which they live and the legal constraints that govern the behaviours and decisions made by those in positions of power and, crucially, what may occur when they do not adhere to those constraints.

Introduction: The Dramatic Turkish Type in the Early Modern Period

In *The Raging Turk* and *The Courageous Turk* (both of which are believed to have been written between the years 1618 and 1619) Goffe presents, in a shift from his contemporaries, characters who seem to part from the traditional Orientalist portrayal of Turks whose sexual appetite parallels with political corruption.[1] Most early modern English plays portray Turks as being the antithesis of what English Christians should be and how they should behave, as S. Schmuck claims with regards to Turks who, from an English Christian perspective, were 'ambiguous, inconsistent, and impulsive'.[2] Mediterranean and Islamic otherness included of a wide variety of identities which 'were

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[1] The term 'Ottoman' is used throughout this article to refer to rulers and inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire, specifically to the characters in Goffe's plays who inhabit the Ottoman Empire and are also examples of more nuanced representations of the stigmatised 'Turk' who inhabits the early modern English stage. 'Turk', although it can be used to refer to the ruling ethnic group within the Ottoman Empire, is used throughout this article to refer to the stereotyped Ottoman figure in accordance with early modern English pro-crusading discourses. (See further explanation of this term below).

[2] S. Schmuck, 'The 'Turk' as Antichrist in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (1570)', *Reformation*, 10.1 (2005), 21-44 (p. 5).

defined by an overlapping set of identity categories, including race, religion, somatic difference, sexuality, and political affiliation'.[3] Furthermore, 'pejorative epithets associated with the Ottomans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries included "bloody", "cruel", and "barbarous"'.[4] Turks were likened to natural disasters, such as tsunamis and tornadoes, and wild animals, such as wolves, snakes, and hogs. The wildness of their behaviours was also reflected in theatrical depictions of Ottoman rule, according to Linda McJannet, which was often 'described as "tyranny" or a "yoke"'.[5]

Goffe, instead, writes on the Ottomans, and on the violence that their laws allowed, as part of a culture where personal choices are subordinated to political ones. This is especially true in the case of the Ottoman Sultan characters, who must prioritise their planning of warfare strategies over their lust for concubine lovers for the benefit of their Empire. Goffe's first known tragedy, *The Raging Turk*, is an embellished dramatisation of the events that occurred within the Ottoman Empire under the reign of Emperor Bajazet II (based upon Sultan Bayezid II, who reigned from 1481-1512). In the play, Bajazet struggles to maintain his monarchical authority because his sons plot to usurp him. In the process of carrying out the Emperor's attempted murder plot, another sixteen characters are killed. Bajazet's grandson, Solyman, then becomes his successor.

The Courageous Turk is inspired by the events that occurred within the Ottoman Empire under the reign of Emperor Amurath I (based upon Sultan Murad I, who reigned from 1319-1389, and upon Mehmed II, who reigned from 1451-1481). Goffe's Amurath shows an even more nuanced portrayal of Ottoman rulers than his Bajazet. The plot sees Amurath infatuated with a captive woman from Greece: his concubine named Eumorphe. His tutor, Lala Schahin, is convinced that Eumorphe will distract Amurath from his political duties and suggests that he murder her to avoid succumbing to lust, and thus, to political failure. Amurath, after much deliberation and feelings of guilt, kills Eumorphe. Goffe appears to portray his Amurath as an effective ruler because the dramatist removes the temptation of lust before his Amurath can engage in it. That is to say that Amurath prioritises rulership over romance and is successful in waging war against, and conquering, the Christians in the first Battle of Kosovo.

Through an analysis of Goffe's unconventional Ottomans, this article explores what constituted political success, corruption, and justice according to English perceptions of Ottoman culture. It concludes that Goffe, in representing his Ottomans as law-abiding politicians (according to Ottoman expectation) who prioritise the religious-political unity of their nation over lascivious distractions, much like English monarchs would have, offers an insightful commentary upon the 'justification' of violence in accordance with political values like patriotism and loyalty, and what happens when they are pitted against religious values, namely mercy. This is an issue that transcends, although is perceived differently across, both national and religious boundaries. Early modern English expectation would have condemned the Ottoman intra-familial murders ordered by

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[3] Daniel Vitkus, *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean* (New York: Springer, 2003), p. 8.
[4] Linda McJannet, *The Sultan Speaks: Dialogue in English Plays and Histories about the Ottoman Turks* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), p. 16.
[5] McJannet, p. 16

Goffe's Sultans, believing that they were a mortal sin, even though they were done in accordance with the Ottoman legal system.

According to Daniel Vitkus, 'the Great [stage] Turk became a European bogey partly on the strength of a dynastic track record of executions, poisonings, strangulations, and general familicide'.[6] The London stage fabricated a significant number of narratives serving a specific political agenda focusing on the fictionalised fall of the Ottoman Empire. During the first half of James I's rule, several pageants, such as *London's Love to the Royal Prince Henrie* (produced May 1610 by Henry, Prince of Wales, Alfred, W. Pollard, and G. R. Redgrave) and *Heaven's Blessings and Earth's Joy* (1613, directed by John Taylor), were staged to aid the celebration of royal affairs and contributed to filling the anti-Muslim agenda.[7] As well as being designed to amuse the English public, these pageants also depicted a fictionalised Christian triumph over the Ottomans who, in reality, were yet to be conquered. The writers of these pageants, undoubtedly aware of the increase in early seventeenth-century Moroccan and Algerian seizure of thousands of English ships, offered narratives of heroic Christian conquests at the expense of dishonourable and weak Muslim opposers. Thus, the pageants voiced hopes, rather than realities, for the defeat of the Ottomans at the hands of a united Christendom.

London's Love to the Royal Prince Henrie depicted an Anglo-Ottoman conflict over the lands belonging to the Muslim (Ottoman Empire) and Christian (England) faiths respectively. Staged on the Thames, a 'water-fight' between a 'Turkish pirate' ship and a 'Worthie Fleete of her Citizens' on board 'two merchant's shippes' was enacted.[8] This fictitious episode emphasised the strength of the heroic English merchants who defeated the Turkish fleets. As J.B. Nichols remarks in a much later commentary on seventeenth-century pageantry entitled *The Progresses, Processions, and Magnificent Festivities, of King James the First*:

> the merchants and men of war, after a long and well-fought skirmish, prooved
> too strong for the pirate, they spoyled bothe him and blew up the castle,
> ending the whole batterie with verie rare and admirable fire-workes, as also a
> worthie peale of chambers.[9]

The anxieties caused by the threat of Ottoman domination may have encouraged the circulation of narratives of doom depicting English hopes of an imminent downfall of Ottoman power in the West. These narratives increasingly adopted negative tropes of lascivious and violent Turks, which became deeply rooted in the early modern cultural discourses. When, for example, the knowledge of the Ottoman sultan's harem – with hundreds of women: wives or sultanas, concubines, and obliques guarded by Black Eunuchs and overseen by a Kislar Aga[10] – reached England, it was immediately used to stigmatise all Turks as sexually unrestrained, though intriguing. However, the Ottoman

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[6] Vitkus, p. 18.

[7] Nabil Matar, *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen in the age of discovery* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 145-46.

[8] J. B. Nichols, *The Progresses, Processions, and Magnificent Festivities, of King James the First* (London: Printed by and for J. B. Nichols, 1828), p. 155.

[9] Nichols, p. 155.

[10] Holm, p. 13.

harem was a private zone and reliable information about what happened in this space was largely unavailable to Western writers. European accounts, like those concerning Ottoman sultans who met Greek lovers in the harem (a popular topic in the early modern period which found its source in Knolles's historical account) were based upon speculation.

English anxieties about Turkish lust and the complications it may have posed to internal politics are evident, for example, in George Peele's *The Turkish Mahomet and Hyren the Fair Greek* (1594). This lost play, according to Farhana Wazir Khan, is thought to have characterised, quite stereotypically, the Turk as being unable to control his lust upon meeting his Greek concubine.[11] Peele, through the portrayal of his Mahomet, suggests that the Turkish male is unable to regulate his passions in order to participate in both the personal and the political; he is only able to become victorious in a crusade if he violently resists lustful distractions. Similarly, Richard Knolles, in his *The Generall Historie of the Turkes* (1603) also refers to Mehmed II's relationship with Hirene as a set of 'disordered affections, where reason ruleth not the reine' and stereotypes his version of the Ottoman Sultan as being the ineffective ruler overcome by lust for Hirene. [12] This leads to his Mahomet's facilitation of Hirene's murder, by which he appears unperturbed and, thus, Knolles' presentation of this Ottoman Sultan also corroborates violent stereotypes often attached to the Turk.

Knolles states that the historical Sultan Mehmed II only succeeded in warfare because he concluded that 'excess of passion, rather than the proper restraint of passion, provoked the execution of Hirene'.[13] Khan argues that:

> this action of bloody determination at the end [of both Goffe's *The Courageous Turk* and Peele's Turk play] looks to work against the idea that Muslim men are incapable [of] control[ling] their sexual modes and perceptions, but only inasmuch as such deeds conflict with their duty as conquerors and holy fighters.[14]

This highlights another central matter in the Christian perception of Islam as being a religion governed by unjust, violent principles. English perceptions of Ottoman law and custom often encouraged English dramatists to create binary distinctions between their portrayals of the virtuous English Christian 'self' and the villainous Turkish Muslim 'Other'. However, I argue that Goffe's writing is instead concerned with blurring this distinction. As a result of humanising his Ottoman characters through his non-adherence to their characterisation as being necessarily lustful, violent, *and* politically corrupt, Goffe comments upon what qualities were required of a leader – be they English or Ottoman – to become successful, resilient, trustworthy, and to establish a politically stable environment according to English audiences.

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[11] Farhana Wazir Khan, 'Mirrors of Governance: 'The Mighty Turkish Diadem' and English Drama (*Selimus.* Sc. xxxvi. 2340)', *Journal of European Studies*, 26.2 (2011), 139-54 (p. 139).

[12] Richard Knolles, *The Generall Historie of the Turkes* (London: Printed by and for Adam Islip, 1610), p. 350.

[13] Knolles, p. 26.

[14] Khan, p. 139.

Historical and Cultural Turkish Types in the Early Modern Period

In order to better recognise the tendency of English writers to villainise their Ottoman characters, it is necessary to understand what caused the feud between the Germanic-Roman Habsburg Empire and the Ottomans. This conflict can be traced back to the medieval period or what became known amongst literary critics and historians as the crusading period.[15] The Habsburg Empire was divided into:

> two parts in late Antiquity: a Western and an Eastern. The decisive event in this respect took place on May 29th, 1453: the fall of the Eastern Roman— or Byzantine — Empire when Sultan Mehmed II (1432-1481), the Conqueror, captured — or liberated — the capital, Constantinople.[16]

From a Christian perspective, the city of Constantinople had been seized by the Antichrist. The disaster was explained as God's vengeance against those Christians who were practising a false religion and were therefore punished by God's scourge: the Turks.[17] The Habsburg Empire was, in the eyes of Ottoman Muslims, occupied by non-believers (Christians). The Ottomans therefore declared that the Ottoman region of the Balkans was the 'domain of war' and that the Balkan region belonging to the Habsburgs was to be transformed, through defeat in battle, 'into the domain of peace'.[18]

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Ottoman Empire expanded in wealth due to newly established Anglo-Ottoman trade links, and gained territory under the reign of Sultan Suleiman I (1495-1566), who led his troops to the 'vicinity of Vienna across the Middle East to Iran and the Arabian Peninsula and took in most of North Africa' in 1683.[19] A definitive event for Ottoman relations with the Western hemisphere took place in the year 1683 when the Ottoman Empire unsuccessfully invaded Vienna, the centre of the Habsburg Empire.[20] This was a defining moment in Ottoman history because it was the first time the Ottomans were the instigators of a crusade against the West, thus starting a chain that ultimately led to the Empire's slow decline and eventual collapse.

Knolles's *The Generall Historie of the Turkes*, which was widely thought to have been Goffe's source text, details the seizure of Constantinople at the hands of the Turks, where he states that Barbarians stormed the Temple of Sophia and slayed the Christian families who had taken refuge from the conflict in the city. He further claims that the Turks then:

> converted [the church] into a stable for their horses, or a place for the execution of their abhominable and unspeakeable filthinesse: the image of

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[15] Lee Manion, *Narrating the Crusades: Loss and Recovery in Medieval and Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 1.

[16] Bent Holm, *The Taming of the Turk: Ottomans on the Danish Stage 1596-1896*, trans. by G. Kynoch (Vienna: Hollitzer, 2013), p. 12.

[17] Andrew Wheatcroft, *The Life and Times of Shaikh Salman Bin Hamad Al-Khalifa: Ruler of Bahrain, 1942-1961* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1995), p. 25.

[18] Holm, p. 13.

[19] Holm, p. 13.

[20] Holm, p. 130.

the crucifix was also by them taken downe, and a Turk cap upon the head […]
and calling it the God of the Christians.[21]

This example of derogatory representations of Turkish male sexuality is also corroborated in Sir Henry Blount's description of Turks exhibiting 'sodomy, which in the Levant is not held a vice'.[22] William Lithgow's English travelogue also describes Turkish men as being 'generally addicted to, besides all their sensuall [sic] and incestuous lusts, unto Sodomy'.[23]

These portrayals of Turks in English travelogues, however, are disputed by a small number of English publications on Ottoman history which contained what can be considered less prejudiced representations of Ottoman citizens and rulers. For example, Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* (1589, 1598-1600), which includes extensive information on the founding and activities of the Levant Company and is known to have been based upon both 'first-hand accounts and official documents, [and] […] presents Anglo-Ottoman diplomacy as ancillary to the Levant trade he is trying to promote, thus denying that it was part of a wider strategy of Anti-Spanish collusion with a nation of Islamic "misbeleevers"'.[24] Thus, it is evident that Hakluyt's main concern was not to demonise the Ottomans or to condemn their customs. Instead, Hakluyt's chronicle seeks to represent the Ottoman Empire as a key trading partner with England – thus encouraging English civility with the Ottomans for commercial benefit – and a region which was rapidly increasing in both military strength and territorial gain.

Western Conception of the Laws of the Ottoman Empire: Machiavelli and Ottoman Tragedy

In order to fully appreciate English perceptions of Ottoman law and custom it is crucial to consider the importance and influence that Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1513) had upon early modern conceptions of law. Machiavelli's writing was mainly concerned with the 'authoritarian apparition of any ruler'[25] with *The Prince* being the most well-known of his works. Gerald Lee Ratcliff provides an outline of the main distinctions Machiavelli makes between different kinds of states. All principalities, says Ratcliff:

> have been governed in one of two ways: either by one absolute prince, to whom all others are completely subordinate, [...] or else by a prince and hereditary nobles who hold their ranks not by the grace of the prince but by the antiquity of their lineage.[26]

According to Machiavelli, the most appropriate example of the principality governed by an absolute sovereign was represented by the Ottoman Empire, whose 'monarchical

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[21] Knolles, p. 26.

[22] Henry Blount, *A Voyage into the Levant* (London: Andrew Cooke, 1636), p. 143.

[23] William Lithgow, 'The Total Discourse of Rare Adventures' (1640), in *Early Modern Tales of Orient: A Critical Anthology,* ed. by K. Parker (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 102.

[24] Anders Ingram, *Writing the Ottomans: Turkish History in early Modern England* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 88.

[25] Önder Çakırtaş, *Ideological Messaging and the Role of Political Literature* (Hershey PA: IGI Global, 2017), p. 150.

[26] Gerald Lee Ratcliff, *Niccolo Machiavelli's The Prince* (New York: Barron's Educational Series Incorporated, 1986), pp. 32-33.

bureaucratic system, as confirmed by Wang Hui in *Politics of Imagining Asia*, was considered 'categorically different [from] European state systems'.[27]

In particular, Machiavelli's text seems to single out some interesting aspects of Ottoman rule: the way in which the sultan's authority depends on his subjects' acknowledgment of the dictatorial nature of his mandate and the fact that democracy does not play any role into the way the empire is governed. In addition to Machaivelli's emphasis upon the importance of legitimacy in the line of succession to power, Donald Quataert also discusses how 'legitimate' Ottoman sons, unlike their English counterpart, do not necessarily need to be the sultan's eldest son:

> all sons in this system possessed a theoretically equal claim to the throne. When the sultan died, a period between his death and the accession of the new monarch usually followed, when the sons jockeyed or manoeuvred. Scrambling for power, the first son to reach the capital and win recognition by the court and the imperial troops became the new ruler.[28]

However, with the dismissal of primogeniture privileges, Ottomans expected — and accepted as compliant with Ottoman law — civil wars brought forward by brothers keen to defend their legitimate right to power. It is this very consideration on Ottoman rule that prompts Machiavelli to state that:

> the prince who causes another to become powerful [...] works his own ruin; for he has contributed to the power of the other either by his own ability or force, and both the one and the other will be mistrusted by him whom he has thus made powerful.[29]

As Harvey Mansfield points out, Machiavellian principle rationalises the catastrophic intra-familial killings for the benefit of the public, stating that 'the essence of this politics is that 'you can get away with murder': that no divine sanction, or degradation of soul, or twinge of conscious will come to punish you'.[30] Thus, the death of the physically weakest potential heir results in bettering the empire's chances of crowning a sultan who possessed the most martial prowess, which may have been reassuring for many Ottomans. This type of Machiavellian politics, 'where morals and principles have little account' was, according to Çakırtaş, 'identified within the characteristic managing structure of the Ottoman Empire'.[31] And thus, while Ottoman rulers become schemers and models of villainous mischief, Goffe's Ottoman characters often offer a more complicated narrative where the actions of the rulers are not determined by the corrupted nature of games of power — as advocated for in *The Prince* — but are instead invoked and endorsed by the laws of their society.

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[27] Wang Hui, *The Politics of Imagining Asia* (Massachusetts: Harvard University, 2011), p. 71.

[28] Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 90.

[29] Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince,* trans. by Leslie J. Walker (London: Penguin Books, 2013), p. 23.

[30] Harvey Mansfield, *Machiavelli's Virtue* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 7.

[31] Çakırtaş, p. 150.

Law and Lust in Goffe's *The Raging Turk* (1618) and *The Courageous Turk* (1619)

According to Joel Slotkin, 'the savage violence of the stereotypical stage Turk is due less to volatile passions and more to the strictures of Turkish law and the imperative to emulate the idealised Turkish national type'.[32] Through outlining instances in which *The Raging Turk* encourages its English audience to understand and respect Bajazet's rationale for his murderous behaviour, and through highlighting where Amurath in *The Courageous Turk* begins to depart from the stereotypical English representation of the Turk as necessarily violent, lustful, *and* politically corrupt, I argue that Ottoman characters in the works of Goffe are products of the above idealisation. Bajazet II, as well as Amurath I, are violent, yet politically just. Bajazet kills his enemies, as well as several of his subjects, in alignment with Ottoman law. According to Christian doctrine, murder is always punishable and, therefore, Bajazet must die as a result of his violence. However, according to Ottoman law, the instances in which Bajazet commits murder are justified, given that he, firstly, embodies the Ottoman national type and, secondly, only murders those who he believes are threatening the Muslim faith. Bajazet, for example, learns of his brother Zemes's capture at the hands of the Romans and of their successful attempt to convert him to Christianity:

> [Zemes to Bishop]: Your counsaile swayes my wishes, my late deedes / Were full of sinne now let my brother know / Zemes repents; (and that's the greatest woe)'.[33]

In Act 3, Scene 1, Bajazet requests that his sons target and kill those Christians who are responsible for the capture of Zemes, or even worse, for his conversion:

> Omnes [Bajazet's son]: What meanes great Bajazet? / Bajazet: To murder you, unlesse you strangle them [Zemes' Christian captors].[34]

This shows his understanding of, and his obedience to, medieval Ottoman laws; the same laws which protected Muslims' religious reputation. When his sons, Thrizam and Mahomet, do not comply with his command, Bajazet takes the decision to strangle them:

> Did I not send these to their Provinees / To hinder Zemes flight? And did not they / Dejected bastards give him open way? / Mine anger hath beene just.[35]

Rather than presenting Bajazet as a despot, Goffe illustrates how the Ottoman Sultan would believe his actions were 'just'. Here, Bajazet believes he is defending the legacy of his religion against Thrizam and Mahomet, who make no effort to prevent Zemes from converting to Christianity.

Goffe explicitly references the degree of violence for which Ottoman law allows. In Act 2, Scene 7, Bajazet and Isaacke (one of the Bassaes) plot to kill the Greek Viceroy Achmetes

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[32] Joel Slotkin, '"Now will I be a Turke": Performing Ottoman Identity in Thomas Goffe's *The Courageous Turk'*, in *Early Modern England and Islamic Worlds*, ed. by Bernadette Andrea and Linda McJannet *(*New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 2.

[33] Thomas Goffe, *The Raging Turk*, in Couragious Turk and Raging Turk, ed. by David Carnegie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), Act 2, Scene 8, lines 1146-1148.

[34] *The Raging Turk*, Act 3, Scene 1, lines 1362-3.

[35] *The Raging Turk*, Act 3, Scene 1, lines 1380-84.

who previously fought Zemes, who he 'vanquish'd by a violent blow'.[36] Goffe illuminates, through Isaacke's reminder to Bajazet, that Ottoman:

> lawes allow a custome, / Not us'd of late, yet firme still in effect, / And thus it is; when there doth breath a man, / Direfully hated of the Emperour, / And he in strickt severitie of right / Cannot proceed against him, then he may / Overwhelme him in a robe of mourning blacke.[37]

The tyranny of Goffe's Ottomans is therefore portrayed but did not result in them being unsuccessful rulers. They possess the freedom to usurp or dethrone someone if they believe their actions are going to result in political or religious disruption. Indeed, disrupting the royal bloodline was, if not generally recommended, allowed by Ottoman law if it was for the good of the state. Ottoman law also dictated (as Goffe points out) that a certain degree of violence can be lawful if it is carried out as an act of revenge against those who threaten the Muslim faith.[38] Thus, Goffe's reference to Ottoman law in his *The Raging Turk* allows for his audience to develop an awareness of alternative perceptions of acceptable violence. He does so through his creation of a new Turkish type who prioritises political duties over lustful impulses and acts violently, not due to their evil human nature but due to their obligation to adhere to the strictures of Ottoman law.

Similarly, Goffe's later tragedy *The Courageous Turk* also raises questions about violence as an alternative method of ruling and what levels of violence are acceptable within society. Goffe's discussion of the Ottoman sexual politics between Amurath and his Greek concubine, Eumorphe in his later play is also interesting. His depiction of Eumorphe as a distraction to Amurath's political duties suggests that it is not for a man to control his urges but rather for the woman to be eliminated so she cannot, in her very living and breathing, pose an invitation to sin. This point is further evidenced by her passivity, objectification and inability to act to save herself. In Act 5, Scene 2, whilst Eumorphe sleeps in her bed, Amurath waits for the arrival of his tutor, Lala Schahin, and two Turkish Captains, Eurenoses and Chafe-Ilbegge. Once they arrive, Schahin hands his sword to Amurath, whom he has now persuaded to kill Eumorphe. Amurath, before proceeding to behead his former captive lover, states:

> Now, now be valour in this manly arme / To cut off troupes of thoughts that would invade me! […] / Here doe I wish as did that Emperour, / That all the heads of that inticing Sexe, / Were upon hers, thus then should one full stroake / Mow them all off.[39]

David Moberly's discussion of the dialectics of Saidian Orientalism applied to early modern Western drama is particularly useful to our exploration of Goffe's portrayal of Eumorphe here. Irene, 'never speaks for herself when telling her story, unlike her male captive

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[36] *The Raging Turk*, Act 2, Scene 5, line 768.

[37] *The Raging Turk*, Act 2, Scene 5, lines 795-802.

[38] See: Khan, 2011; see: Astrid Stilma, *A King Translated: The Writings of King James VI & I and their Interpretation in the Low Countries, 1593-1603* (London: Taylor and Francis Publishing Ltd, 2016).

[39] Thomas Goffe, *The Courageous Turk,* in Courageous Turk and Raging Turk, ed. by David Carnegie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), Act 5, Scene 2, lines 704-711.

counterparts, many of whom wrote or dictated to others their experiences as slaves'.[40] The various narratives involving the character of Irene in early modern literature (drama included) are less concerned with telling the story of her captivity and more with using these accounts to represent England as grappling with the results of increased Anglo-Ottoman commerce and the dangers posited by current political agendas.

According to Öz Öktem, James I signed a peace agreement with Spain in 1604, which not only ended the Anglo-Spanish war but also, as a consequence, inverted the amicable ties that Elizabeth I had previously formed between England and the Ottoman Empire. In Goffe's account of the Irene-figure's murder, instead of adopting a blatant anti-Ottoman agenda, his writing seems to align with 'the anti-Greek polemicists who tried to portray the Turkish conquest of Constantinople as the revenge of the Trojans against the corrupt Greeks'.[41] The scene of Eumorphe's murder at the hands of Amurath can inform our understanding of Goffe's stance on Turkish stereotypes. However, I argue that the scene should not be interpreted as 'an occurrence of how eagerly Turks may be persuaded by lustful passions, but rather an illustration of Machiavellian political theatre',[42] given that Goffe's portrayal of Amurath is heavily focused upon this character's evolution as he adopts the various roles expected of him by his Empire: the lover, the father, and the Sultan. *The Courageous Turk* is a play in which Ottomans are, unusually, portrayed with more nuance because of the emphasis placed upon the multifaceted role of the Ottoman Sultan, and the intimacy felt by the audience because of Amurath's dilemma between nature and duty.

Goffe's Amurath makes a declaration, during the first scene of the play, that he will exceed Jove in lust: 'Jove Ile outbrave thee! / melt thy selfe in / Lust…Ile not envie thee'.[43] However, Amurath later becomes concerned that his being enamoured with Eumorphe may pose detrimental to his political duties. As a result, he fears that his fellow Ottomans will view him, their leader, as 'a Lusty, Lazy, wanton, Coward' and will rebel against his political methods.[44] The relationship between Amurath and Eumorphe however, according to Schahin, has merely been forged by 'intemperate Lust'.[45] Schahin further states that 'Affections are good Servants: but if will / Make them once Master, theyle prove Tyrants still'.[46] As in Knolles, the fact that Goffe's Amurath follows Schahin's advice (to kill Eumorphe and to focus upon battle) is presented as having positive consequences for the Ottomans, who are now portrayed as successful in battle. Thus, a shift in Amurath's focus (after he kills Eumorphe) becomes evident, because he is now driven by the prospect of warfare as opposed to sexual passion. This becomes evident when he expresses (repeatedly) that his sole yearning is to slay, and to subsequently drink the

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[40] David Moberly, 'Mehmed II and His Woman: The Idea of Europe in Early Modern Representations of a Female Captive', in *The Dialectics of Orientalism in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Marcus Keller and Javier Irigoyen-García (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 137-153 (p. 139).

[41] Fahd Mohamed Taleb Al-Olaqi, 'The Courageous Ottoman in Goffe's *Amurath I* (1619)', *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 7.6 (2016), 168-77 (p. 171).

[42] Al-Olaqi, p. 173.

[43] *The Courageous Turk*, Act 1, Scene 1, lines 25-7.

[44] *The Courageous Turk*, Act 2, Scene 3, line 56.

[45] *The Courageous Turk*, Act 2, Scene 4, line 4.

[46] *The Courageous Turk*, Act 1, Scene 2, line 10.

blood of, his Christian opponents.[47] Although Goffe does not completely de-stereotype the Turk (given that his Ottoman protagonist still exhibits violent behaviour), his *The Courageous Turk* becomes one of the first plays of the period to abandon the trope of the lustful Turk who is not able to be successful in military ventures.

Basic quantitative analysis via the *Literature Online* database demonstrates how theatre appropriates the stereotype of the lustful Turk in plays published before and after the Restoration. The adjective 'lustful' (in all its variants and spellings) is attributed to the 'Turk' in a selection of 43 plays published during the years 1600-1670. What is interesting, however, is the texts' widespread combination of the Turk's sensuous appetite with political tyranny, as evidenced in plays such as *Lust's Dominion* (1600), *The Fair Maid of the West* (1602), and *The Renegado* (1630), to mention but a few of the most popular performed works. In these dramatic works, the traditional Orientalist stereotype of lustful Turks reappears in the characters of Eleazar, Mullisheg, and Asambeg, who successfully contribute to the downfall of European monarchs by persuading them to embrace a lustful behavior, thus becoming unfit rulers in the eyes of their subjects.[48]

Critical interest in the representation of Turks within an Orientalist discourse focuses upon specific associations of Turkishness with indolence, barbarity, despotism, and lustfulness.[49] Whereas Goffe characterises his Bajazet, though just, as lustful and violent, his Amurath is only characterised as violent once he has renounced his lust. Both Sultans are a political 'model for admiration and imitation'[50] because they win each of the holy battles they wage respectively. It is in these battles that they exhibit, as Linda McJannet argues, qualities that were admired by early modern Ottomans and Christians alike: 'unity, martial excellence, and strict justice, qualities which they [Christians] sometimes felt were lacking in their own societies'.[51]

The fact that Goffe's portrayal of Amurath does not align with these typical early modern representations of the demonised Turk is also evident when he talks of rinsing his hands with the blood of the Christian enemies he will fight in battle. When Amurath states that 'Our furie's patient! now will I be a Turke',[52] he appears to view the adopting of such violence as a necessity to maintain his Ottoman identity. Violent scenes like this are therefore justified as 'necessary' and legitimate according to Ottoman culture; a justification also evident when Amurath is debating whether to remain with Eumorphe or to kill her so that he can enter battle. Torn between the two choices, he fears that:

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[47] *The Courageous Turk*, Act 3, Scene 2, line 44; Act 4, Scene 2, line 89.

[48] See: Lamiya Almas, *The Women of the Early Modern Turk and Moor Plays* (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 2009).

[49] See: Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1978); see: Ania Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race and Colonialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); see: Nevsal Tiryakioglu, *The Western image of Turks from the Middle Ages to the 21st century: the myth of 'terrible Turk' and 'lustful Turk'* (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Nottingham Trent University, 2015).

[50] McJannet, p. 60.

[51] McJannet, p. 60.

[52] *The Courageous Turk*, Act 3, Scene 2, line 9.

> The Christians now will scoffe at Mahomet; / Perchance they sent this wretch thus to inchant me'.[53]

Here, Goffe illuminates the remarkably binary choice that Amurath faces; a choice which has no possibility of compromise which the dramatist could have chosen to include because of his aim for conflict to drive the drama. Moreover, though, what Goffe's illustration of Amurath's binary choice serves the purpose of doing is blurring the distinction between what is considered virtuous or vicious behaviour, and in the necessity of the act, he reverses the stereotype.

Conclusion: Mercy and Justice in Goffe

In *The Courageous Turk,* Amurath kills his lover Eumorphe whom he initially considers marrying and having her rise from the position of Greek concubine to Ottoman Sultana. After Amurath murders Eumorphe at the recommendation of Schahin, his attention does shift, as his tutor claims, from love to war, evidenced through his attempts to invade lands held by members of his family. However, when he decides to invade Caramania, ruled by his son-in-law Aladin, Amurath is faced with his daughter (Aladin's wife), Hatan's plea to cease the attack.[54] Hatan's plea is also encouraged by a nobleman who suggests to Aladin that he:

> take the Queene along, / And your two children; they may move his eyes; / For, desperate sores aske desperate remedies'.[55]

The plea, however, seems unsuccessful as Amurath maintains his position and declares his intention to murder his grandchildren, thus prompting further begging from Hatan:

> If not, appease those murdering thoughts with me: / For as Jocasta pleaded with her sonnes / For their deare Father, so to a Father I / For my deare Babes and husband; husband, father, / Which shall I first embrace? [...] Look on thy child / With pardoning lookes, not with a Warriers eye.[56]

It is this second desperate imploration from Hatan that prompts Amurath's doubts about whether to follow his nation's wishes and laws or whether to preserve the filial relationship. He first states that, if he were to adhere to his nation's wishes and kill his grandchildren, he would eliminate the chance of them attempting to overthrow him:

> We see a little Bullocke, 'mongst an heard / Growes on a sudden tall, and in the Fields, / Frolicks so much, he makes his Father yield.[57]

However, Amurath eventually listens to Hatan's requests and shows mercy. Nowhere in the play does Aladin attempt to overthrow Amurath, signifying that his decision to deviate from Ottoman law has no dangerous consequences on Amurath's life and his rule.

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[53] *The Courageous Turk*, Act 2, Scene 3, lines 50-51.
[54] *The Courageous Turk*, Act 4, Scene 4, lines 1350-53.
[55] *The Courageous Turk*, Act 4, Scene 4, lines 1356-1359.
[56] *The Courageous Turk*, Act 5, Scene 1, lines 1434-1449.
[57] *The Courageous Turk,* Act 5, Scene 1, lines 1487-1490.

Amurath claims that, in allowing both his grandchildren and Aladin to live, he is employing 'mild Warriers pitty'.[58] Goffe, through this scene, signifies that mercy is 'safe' provided it is granted within the family circle. Ultimately, Amurath meets his death because he decides, once again, to show mercy to Cobelitz, a Christian warrior who is duelling with him on the battlefield. Amurath states that:

> by Mahomet and we are weary now: / Some Mercy shall lay Victory asleep. / It will a Lawreat prove to this great strife / 'Mongst all these murdered to give one his life.[59]

However, as mentioned above, this scene has different consequences from the one with Hatan because Cobelitz immediately seizes an opportunity to take advantage of Amurath's compassion and stabs him to death. Amurath's miscalculation lies in his misinterpretation of the implications raised by the expression 'obtaining justice'.[60] Justice, in fact, can only be achieved, according to the Ottomans, with the complete defeat of Christians and the protection of Muslim people. Thus, Goffe's Amurath is unsuccessful in 'obtaining justice' because he is slain by a Christian and cannot be the individual – as the Sultan supposedly should be – who leads the Ottoman army into the victory that they eventually obtain in this instance. Goffe seems, once again, to reframe in the cultural discourses the precondition according to which Turks are unmerciful and violent and then he reverses that stereotype by portraying Cobelitz as the unmerciful Christian.

Despite his death, the military triumphs of Amurath's army are never described as savage or barbaric ventures, but as 'noble deeds'[61] which are both threatening and admirable. Emily Bartels states that

> while the demonization of Oriental rulers provided a highly charged impetus for England's own attempts to dominate the East, their valorisation provided a model for admiration and imitation, shaming or schooling the English into supremacy, or providing an excuse for defeat.[62]

Goffe's more nuanced portrayal of Ottomans continues even after Amurath's death. Bajazet, who is the eldest of Amurath's sons in *The Courageous Turk*, also shows initial mercy to his younger brother Jacup by offering to share the throne and divide their monarchical responsibilities in order to let Jacup live. Schahin intervenes once again, arguing that Bajazet must respect 'the Turkish Lawes'.[63] Even the Turkish Captain, Eurenoses encourages the respect of laws as the only way to maintain control over his people:

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[58] *The Courageous Turk*, Act 5, Scene 1, line 1520.

[59] *The Courageous Turk*, Act 5, Scene 4, lines 1766-1770.

[60] Joy Pasini, *Kin with Kin and Kind with Kind Confound: Pity, Justice, and Family Killing in Early Modern Dramas Depicting Islam* (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Rice University, 2011), p. 116.

[61] *The Courageous Turk,* Act 1, Scene 5, line 91.

[62] Emily Bartels, 'Imperialist Beginnings: Richard Hakluyt and the Construction of Africa', *Criticism,* 34.4 (1992), 517-38 (p. 517).

[63] *The Courageous Turk,* Act 5, Scene 4, line 143.

> Although we speake, yet thinke them not our words, / But what the Land speakes in us'.[64]

In *The Courageous Turk*, Bajazet is then persuaded by his own advisors to strangle Jacup who, adhering to the code of honour, holds one side of the rope. Jacup's agreement to a ritualistic suicide raises, once again, the importance of adhering to law and political success in state matters, thus effectively explaining and justifying the violence offered on stage. In Knolles, Bajazet's compliance with the legal requirement of Jacup's strangulation marks 'the beginning of the most unnatural and inhumane custome, ever since holden for a most wholesome good policie amongst the Turkish kings and emperours'.[65] Contrastingly, Goffe depicts Bajazet as a law-abiding ruler rather than a tyrant, which is an important departure from contemporary accounts of the same story and, in particular, from Knolles' text.

Goffe seems to problematise any straightforward definition and appreciation of mercy, such as the one found in *The Merchant of Venice* (1596). In Shakespeare's play, mercy is seen as a necessary means to healthy power. Nancy Shields Kollman argues that Shakespeare's play 'develops into an astute commentary on the virtue of employing mercy in judicial practice'.[66] Portia's speech in Act 4, Scene 1 implies that mercy has mutual benefits for the individual granting it and for the individual receiving it: 'mercy is above this sceptred sway; / It is enthroned in the hearts of kings, / It is an attribute to God himself'.[67] Mercy in Shakespeare is considered an instrument of authority as powerful as the 'dread and fear' taught by God himself because 'Shakespeare praises benevolence — the ruler most closely approaches God not when he wields his scepter, but when he "seasons" justice with mercy'.[68]

Goffe successfully represents Ottoman perceptions of law and demonstrates that mercy is not always necessary or advisable. And yet, Goffe is also successful in showing how Bajazet's decision is only taken out of political and representational necessity because Bajazet must kill his brother to secure his power and must be seen as willing to do so. Even when faced with the decision to kill his sons in *The Raging Turk*, Bajazet explores the validity of the reasons behind the necessary deeds:

> Mine angers at the highest, and I could shake / The firme foundation of the earthly Globe: / Could I but graspe the Poles in these two handes, / I'de plucke the world asunder; droppe thou bright Sunne, / From thy transparant Spheare, thy course is done, / Great Baiazet is wrong'd not shall thine eye / Be witnesse to my hatefull misery. / Madnesse and anger makes my tongue betray, / The Chaos of my thoughts: under this brest, / An heape of indigested cases are prest.[69]

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[64] *The Courageous Turk,* Act 5, Scene 4, lines 177-8.

[65] Knolles, p. 3.

[66] Nancy Shields Kollmann, 'The Quality of Mercy in Early Modern Legal Practice', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History,* 7.1 (2006), 5-22 (p. 5).

[67] Shakespeare, William, *The Merchant of Venice*, in *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. by Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, and David Scott Katsan (London: Bloomsbury, 1998), pp. 831-58, Act 4, Scene 1, lines 190-93.

[68] Kollmann, p. 5.

[69] *The Raging Turk,* Act 2, Scene 8, lines 56-65.

In this extract, the cosmic rendering that Bajazet would do, fuelled by his anger (if only he could) seems to be a way of convincing himself of his own status and therefore the actions that his greatness requires. Therefore, Bajazet is in fact a psychologically complex character who interrogates himself on the value of the violence he is being asked to carry out; the shift from 'plucke[ing] the world asunder' to having indigestion serves to remind us of Bajazet's humanity. This is particularly important to note because, whilst Bajazet is undoubtedly violent, Goffe makes explicit that the Sultan has, perhaps not moral qualms (as his Amurath does) but instead, difficulty with accepting his authority to carry out grave deeds such as familicide. This is evidenced through his need to recount the specific ways in which these deeds are invoked by the laws of his society. Thus, in Goffe's plays merciful actions are further complicated by the clashing appreciation of mercy in two different cultural discourses, which are represented by Ottoman characters and English characters respectively (in the dramatic internal frame) and by the English audience (in the external frame).

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Arrival

Jane Hartshorn

grey-brown and fruit-softened   paper-knife
          parsing flesh from bone

the wrinkled parts   ivory handle
          furrowed white with bath-water   unsealing

a fold from navel to thigh
          bluish curve of serous membrane

waist-deep in old shape
          hem pleating around ankles

my implements
          their sharp edges   waxing crescent

          --/--/--/--

tingle of a new mouth
                    sucking its way

to the surface

spout of flesh
                              caving atrophic

depression of earth

                    invisible thumb

                    saline like spittle
warm around the puncture

below a
                    secret eye

          swivel of translucent iris

yellow sleep   in the triangle

          where the lid meets

muscle pinching bone   newly knit

                    slipping into dermis
needle-bright

Critical Commentary

In her 1926 essay 'On Being Ill', Virginia Woolf describes 'the undiscovered countries' that are unveiled 'when the lights of health go down'.[1] Illness can render the body an unfamiliar place. Rather than a 'home' we inhabit, in illness the body can become an unknown territory, provoking feelings of disorientation and estrangement. Drew Leder writes that '[t]o fall ill is not simply to undergo a physiological transformation but a transformation of one's experiential world'.[2] Illness changes our experience of our body in the world, shaping the way in which we interact and engage with our environment. For example, pain or discomfort may impact movement – altering our gait, our flexibility, our ability to grasp objects.

This is in contrast to our experience of our body in the world before the onset of illness or diagnosis. Leder describes how 'in health, we simply *are* our body. We gaze, speak, move our way through the world, taking for granted our physical capacities and all they render available'.[3] Like Woolf's concept of the body as a sheet of plain glass through which 'the soul looks straight and clear'[4] the body and the mind appear unified – there is little slippage between thinking and doing.

However, when in pain or physical discomfort, we experience a heightened awareness of our body; in Woolf's words, 'all day, all night the body intervenes'.[5] The chasm between thought and action widens. In its refusal to cooperate, the body becomes strange in illness – 'like a possession now uncomfortably possessing us'.[6] Rather than a vessel we inhabit, it becomes an agent we must negotiate with. Chronic illness or disease can be experienced as a foreign intruder, an alien other that takes root in the body, a kind of parasite eating the self from inside out. Autoimmune conditions involve a rejection of self; the brain identifies the body as other and attacks it. Leder writes that 'in illness the body surfaces as strangely *other.* It asserts an autonomous life, refusing to obey our commands'.[7] The sick person may feel trapped in a body that will not bend to the mind's will, which refuses to conform to normative standards of how bodies should behave. It is this concept of the body as an 'alien other' that I explore in 'Arrival'.

The short, clipped lines and phrases in 'Arrival' describe a subject that has been fragmented by the experience of illness. Disjointed and at times mismatched, the lines do not quite meet at the seams, leaving ragged edges, gaps the reader has to stitch together. The slippage between mind and body is further emphasised by the poem's lack of a lyric 'I'; the reader is unsure who or what is speaking. The poem gives voice to the body, lets it drive the shape and the form of the poem, and exist in the spaces and silences of illness.

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[1] Virginia Woolf, 'On Being Ill' *The New Criterion,* Vol IV, No 1, January 1926, p. 32.

[2] Drew Leder, *The Distressed Body: Rethinking Illness, Imprisonment, and Healing* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016) p. 14.

[3] Leder, p. 15.

[4] Woolf, p. 32.

[5] Woolf, p. 32.

[6] Leder, p. 1.

[7] Leder, p. 16.

The poem is influenced by Julia Kristeva's concept of the abject as being opposed to *I*, as an indeterminate place between subject and object. The abject in this instance refers to substances which are expelled by the body, such as blood, faeces, mucus, and urine. Kristeva describes the abject as that which 'disturbs identity, system, order',[8] the abject reveals that the body is a permeable construct, always on the verge of spilling over. In illness, bodily functions can be harder to control. Abject substances move from interior to exterior, crossing the porous membrane of the body. They are both 'me' and 'not me'; it is not clear where the body begins and ends. In its refusal to 'respect borders, positions, rules', the abject draws the subject into a liminal state of being, one where the notion of the self as a discrete entity is dissolved.[9]

Kristeva writes that the abject signifies 'the in-between, the ambiguous, the composite [...] a fragile state where man strays on the territory of *animal*'.[10] The abject reminds us of our animalistic origins and the vulnerability of our bodies; it represents the inevitability of death and must be 'radically excluded'[11] in order to protect the integrity of the self. However, if we embrace the ambiguity of this border, perhaps this in-between state can be interpreted as the amorphous body of the human-animal.

In 'Arrival' I explore the mutability, formlessness and the instability of both human and animal bodies. The poem was inspired by the work of artist Kiki Smith, particularly her 2002 work 'Born': a bronze sculpture of a deer giving birth to a woman. Smith aligns the reproductive body with the animal: both expand, swell and change shape during menstruation, pregnancy, and childbirth.

For Kristeva, the skin is a 'fragile container'[12] a border between the internal and the external, and in 'Arrival' I wanted to imagine how this container may be stretched, or reshaped by illness. I was inspired by mythological shapeshifters, such as the selkie, or the werewolf. In Norse and Celtic mythology, selkies are 'seal people' or 'skin-walkers' – creatures who are able to shed their skins and take human form. Werewolves are said to turn their skin inside out, embodying the abject fear of one's insides spilling to the outside, and blurring the external and internal. In 'Arrival,' I employ the body of the human-animal as a space within which to explore the embodied experience of illness, and the possibilities of imagining illness as a kind of rebirth, or metamorphosis.

The theme of abjection also informs the structure of the poem. In the second stanza, the form continues to break down even further, unravelling any kind of continuity or sense of narrative. Chronic illness is a-linear; there is often no discernible 'beginning', and it does not end in resolution or recovery. Sara Wasson writes that illness is a 'narrative crisis' that 'lock[s] [the patient] in a present without a sense of a coherent narrative of past and

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[8] Kristeva, Julia, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982) p. 4.
[9] Kristeva, p. 4.
[10] Kristeva, pp. 4-12.
[11] Kristeva, p. 2.
[12] Kristeva, p. 53.

imagined future'.[13] 'Arrival' attempts to reflect the a-temporality of illness, and, like Arthur Frank's chaos narrative, takes place 'on the edge of a wound […] on the edges of speech'.[14] The poem depicts the gradual process of estrangement from one's own body as a single moment of metamorphosis, a scene in which the body rapidly transitions from self to other.

With 'Arrival', I attempt to reflect the experience of chronic illness, rather than make sense of it. I did not want to impose any kind of logic upon my own lived experience of illness, or search for meaning. Instead, I push the boundaries of reality in order to come closer to what I consider to be an embodied expression of illness.

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[13] Sarah Wasson, 'Before narrative: episodic reading and representations of chronic pain', *Medical Humanities* 44:106-112 (2018) p. 107.
[14] Frank, p. 101.

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'A horned man's a monster and a beast': Shakespeare's Spectre of Cuckoldry

Johnny Ignacio

'Invisible but horrid'

In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid recounts the Greek myth of the hunter Actaeon who stumbles upon the goddess Diana bathing naked in the woods. Catching sight of his gaze, she furiously transforms him into a stag and he is killed by his own hounds: 'antlers she raised upon his dripping head', placing 'terror in his heart'.[1] The myth was a popular story amongst artists and writers of the Renaissance. Painters, like Titian, usually illustrated Actaeon's death at the point of seeing Diana. In Edward Sharpham's city comedy, entitled *Cupid's Whirligig*, the 'jealous knight' Sir Timothy Troublesome references the myth as he attempts to uncover more information about his wife's chastity; his suspicions of infidelity consume him:

> KNIGHT: You are a whore wife, a whore.
>
> LADY: Sir, the man is mad.
>
> KNIGHT: I, horne mad, ah thou vile perfidious, detestable, lasciuious, vnsatiable, Luxurious and abhominable strumpet, was it not enough to be an Acteon, a cornuto, a cuckolde, but to make mee a Baude, a Pimpe, a Pander?[2]

Actaeon is equated to a cuckold — the derisive name for 'the husband of an adulterous wife', who knows nothing about his wife's infidelity while everyone around him does.[3] According to Leonard Barkan, Actaeon is an 'exposed fool, whose punishment is not only animal transformation but also a kind of castration', an unmanning which makes him akin to the cuckold's sexual plight.[4] The allusion to the myth recalls a long-standing notion that female sexuality is dangerous and that, somehow, looking can be destructive.[5] Thus symbolising the undermining of the male sexual prerogative, Actaeon's narrative also provides a theory for the reasoning behind why the cuckold is marked with horns. This symbol of marital infidelity comes from the sarcastic use of the horns of virile animals, like rams and stags, which are important markers of mating status and sexual potency in competition for females. The idea is that these very masculine symbols are applied ironically to men whose manhood and honour has been undermined by their wife's infidelity. Another explanation for the origins of the horns comes from the practice of keeping capons which involves planting or engrafting the spurs of a castrated cock on the

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[1] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. by E.J. Kennedy, trans. by A.D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 56-57.

[2] Edward Sharpham, *Cupid's Whirligig* (London, 1607) <search.proquest.com/eebo> [accessed on 21 June 2021] (p. 31).

[3] James T. Henke, *Courtesans and Cuckolds: A Glossary of Renaissance Dramatic Bawdy* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1979), p. 59.

[4] Leonard Barkan, 'Diana and Actaeon: The Myth as Synthesis', *English Literary Renaissance*, 10.3 (Autumn 1980), 317-359 (p. 351).

[5] Cf., Hélène Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', *Signs*, 1.4 (1976), 875-893.

root of the excised comb, whereby horns grow.[6] The cuckold's horns may seem a bizarre emblematic association in these contexts, but Coppélia Kahn − from a psychoanalytic viewpoint − shows that they are the cuckold's only phallic organ, paradoxically denoting his lack of masculinity and virility.[7]

This paper will survey early modern views of masculinity through a close investigation of the popular cuckoldry motif in *Othello* and *The Winter's Tale*. I present a narrative of masculinity through cuckoldry as a useful framework for understanding gendered identity, exploring both early modern masculinity and the cultural anxieties that afflicted many men in this period. Marital relationships connect both plays since the first steps of manhood in this period involves consummating marriage, and cuckoldry almost always occurs in, and is associated with, marriage. Alexandra Shepherd states that wives are 'the means by which a man became whole'. [8] Marriage defines and categorises the social and cultural parameters of masculinity insofar as man is incomplete without a spouse. Therefore, marriage is a necessary rite of passage for early modern men. Lawrence Stone also notes that the wife is meant to be 'silent [...] in the home, and at all times submissive to men'.[9] He cites the 'Homily of Marriage' as leaving society with no doubts about 'the inferior status, rights, and character of a wife'.[10] Furthermore, according to Amy Louise Erickson, 'marriage is supposed to have taken place for reasons of financial interest, rather than personal attachment, and the significance of children for their parents is presumed to have been limited to the production of a male heir'.[11] The sexual purity of a wife is so highly valued by the husband as to suggest that matters of inheritance are vital to him. As Alison Sinclair observes, 'if a man is to pass on his property to his children, then he needs to know that they are indeed his children'.[12] *The Winter's Tale* in particular expounds, to varying degrees, the extent of the patrilineal bloodline, emphasising the importance of the legitimate descent of a male's progeny.

In addition to the horned imagery, the other frequent animal image associated with cuckoldry is its surprising etymological namesake which arises from a long-standing knowledge of ornithology.[13] Practising a strategy called brood parasitism, whereby the parasitic parent relies on another species to raise its young for them, the cuckoo lays its eggs in another bird's nest and later displaces the natural parent. An obvious but unusual

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[6] Cf., Robert Bates Graber and Gregory C. Richter, 'The Capon Theory of the Cuckold's Horns: Confirmation or Conjecture?', *The Journal of American Folklore*, 100.395 (Jan-Mar 1987), 58-63; the German word for cuckold originally meant capon.

[7] Coppélia Kahn, *Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), p. 122.

[8] Alexandra Shepherd, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 74.

[9] Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), p. 198.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Amy Louise Erickson, *Women & Property in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 6.

[12] Alison Sinclair, *The Deceived Husband: A Kleinian Approach to the Literature of Infidelity* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), p. 31.

[13] The word 'cuckold' comes from the cuckoo with the addition of the pejorative suffix. Cuckoo comes from the Old French *cucu* from the Latin *cuculus*; the Old French for cuckold is *cucuault*.

comparison since the 'cuckold is not the cuckoo'.[14] Instead, the comparison identifies the unfortunate adoptive parent, the cuckoo's victim, as the cuckold who raises another man's children as his own. The odd association between cuckoos and horns with the cuckold implies masculine displacement, which stems from the fact that 'horns', according to Francisco Vaz Da Silva, 'represent the ritual defilement […] of the husband unable to defend the "sanctity" of his wife's virtue'.[15] This figurative castration is not entirely dissimilar to the cuckoo analogy, which insinuates that the cuckold fails to protect his wife's chastity, rearing illegitimate offspring as a result. The exploitation of animal imagery underlines the significant but fragile relationship between male honour and female chastity, evident by the fact that cuckoldry, in early modern culture, David M. Turner writes, is a 'conceptually different' variation on adultery 'in that it deflected the sinfulness (and blame) of marital infidelity by mocking the follies or inadequacies of the adulteress's husband'.[16]The cuckold's stigma comes from his inability to please his wife, which makes monikers most shameful. His mockery is thus inextricably linked with masculine codes of honour, which dictates that failure to control female behaviour amounts to ignominy.

The husband resides over ownership of his wife's chastity which means he must control her sexual behaviour and act as the steward of her body. For her chastity to be lost or stolen meant much more than the loss of property. It concerns a matter of masculine honour. The commonplace notion that women are objectified, acting as property for men, is configured through the male gaze in these plays.[17] As Kahn observes, early modern masculinity is ultimately 'the retention of exclusive sexual property in women'.[18] Simone de Beauvoir's theory of woman as Other is helpful in trying to understand this relationship.[19] The only way for a man to gain his patriarchal privileges is by configuring his masculinity directly against the construction of woman as Other. While I grant that chastity remains a self-defining virtue for women in this period, I want to go further and claim that their chastity is, in some sense, the crux of manhood. What Shakespeare's later cuckoldry plays intuitively demonstrate, and which I will argue, is the notion that a man's failure to protect his wife's chastity is commensurate with failure to defend his manhood. Masculinity is heavily dependent on a wife's chastity, with male identity being largely defined by the ability to control female sexual behaviour. Nowhere is this better exemplified than in the case of the cuckold who symbolises the injured and weakened man.

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[14] Julian Pitt-Rivers, 'Honor', a Radcliffe-Brown Lecture in Social Anthropology given at the British Academy (1995) <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/documents/2455/94p229.pdf> [accessed on 21 June 2021] (p. 243).

[15] Francisco Vaz Da Silva, 'Sexual Horns: The Anatomy and Metaphysics of Cuckoldry in European Folklore', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 48.2 (April 2006), 396-418 (p. 398).

[16] David M. Turner, *Fashioning Adultery: Gender, Sex, and Civility in England, 1660-1740* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 83.

[17] Cf., Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, 16.3 (Autumn 1975), 6-18.

[18] Kahn, p. 132.

[19] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949).

In Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, the Welsh Gentlewoman sings a bawdy song to the young Tim Yellowhammer reflecting the inherent libidinal nature of female sexuality:

> Cupid is Venus' only joy
>
> But he is a wanton boy,
>
> A very, very wanton boy,
>
> He shoots at ladies' naked breasts,
>
> He is the cause of most men's crests,
>
> I mean upon the forehead,
>
> Invisible but horrid.[20]

She wishes to make clear that she is sexually available to him. At the same time, she also acknowledges, to his naive ignorance, that she will most likely cuckold him. The crest unmistakably refers to the cuckold's horns, acting as a symbol of the cuckold's inevitable deception and torment. Indeed, cuckoldry acts as a spectre in the sense that it is widely feared as a dangerous and unwanted occurrence that is frequently enacted out of sight, a source of dread and terror, an unreal object of thought, a phantasm of the brain.[21] But its ghost is also a real threat for many men in this period and a continuous presence on the Renaissance stage − unable to be seen, but anxiously anticipated. Allusions to the spectre of cuckoldry and, by extension, female sexuality provide an 'expression of anxieties related to patriarchy and the genealogical ascription of identity', according to Bruce Boehrer.[22] This spectre is the result of a confluence of several different beliefs and factors such as women being perceived as sexual betrayers that will inevitably horn their husbands; secondly, that a man's infidelity is tolerated more than a woman's, evident by the fact that the former is not a major literary concern; lastly, that masculine honour is determined by female virtue. These are all reinforced by the fact that women cannot be cuckolds − the equivalent term cuckquean is rarely used in the literature of the period and is now obsolete.[23]

But, while this spectre reiterates the universal patriarchal anxiety over female infidelity, the ubiquitous jokes and insults associated with cuckoldry in both the drama and popular ballads of the period cannot be ignored since they 'provoke mirth rather than sympathy' and 'invite a detached rather than an engaged attitude'.[24] Nevertheless, Claire McEachern

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[20] Thomas Middleton, *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, in *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, ed. by David Bevington, Lars Eagle, Katharine Eisaman Maus, and Eric Rasmussen (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), IV.1.164-70; subsequent references to this edition are incorporated into the text.

[21] *Oxford English Dictionary* <https://www.oed.com/> [accessed on 21 June 2021].

[22] Bruce Boehrer, *Shakespeare Among the Animals: Nature and Society in the Drama of Early Modern England* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), p. 71.

[23] *Oxford English Dictionary* <https://www.oed.com/> [accessed on 21 June 2021].

[24] Mark I. Millington and Alison S. Sinclair, 'The Honourable Cuckold: Models of Masculine Defence', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 29.1, (1992), 1-19 (p. 1).

contends that this laughter releases nervous social tension, 'allowing the audience to transmute some deeper fear into the more lighthearted one of mere adultery'.[25] The spectre of cuckoldry is a masculine dilemma in Renaissance drama. It projects an indelible fear of the patriarch's concern over a phenomenon that proclaims a system dependent upon female chastity. Though the metaphorical horns incite amusement by marking the unbeknownst cuckold to the general public as a castrated animal, they nevertheless, like the knowledge of a wife's fidelity, also constitute a fear that is 'invisible but horrid' − any man can be horned unknowingly. Mark Breitenberg's work on how 'masculinity is inherently anxious' is helpful in understanding the existence of this threat.[26] Historicising the conditions that led to 'cuckoldry anxiety', he posits that 'cuckoldry anxiety rehearses a play that may never be performed since it is largely a projection of the husband's own fears translated into a story about his wife's inevitable infidelity or concupiscence'.[27] Cuckoldry is ultimately all about understanding and misunderstanding nature − it is delayed knowledge.

Moreover, the epistemological exercise of seeing confers masculine authority, but this can lead to a desirous knowledge of a woman's fidelity that can cause imaginative and visual impairment. Thus, the connection between Actaeon and the cuckold is the 'boastful belief' in their 'own combination of sexual and visionary' prowesses.[28] Actaeon and his distant cousin, the cuckold, are derided for very different but mutually reinforcing reasons: the former, for looking at a woman's naked body; the latter, for not knowing about his wife's infidelity. Their emasculated punishments are equally as ruinous. Katharine Eisaman Maus justifies that this search of optical corroboration of infidelity aligns the audience with the cuckold since they, as voyeurs, are impelled to see the spectre on the stage: 'just as the cuckold's horns are real but invisible, so the domain of the characters' sexual activity is taken for granted but inevitably eliminated from view'.[29] The spectre is never seen, but its presence is acutely felt. To understand this dichotomy, visual perception and interpretive knowledge will also inform this study. *Othello* and *The Winter's Tale* will be analysed in tandem in order to understand how one informs the other, and examine to what extent is masculinity affected and communicated by such discourses.

'The green-eyed monster'

In his seminal study *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Robert Burton discusses jealousy as one of the most devastating symptoms of melancholia. In particular, Burton expounds on love-

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[25] Claire McEachern, 'Why Do Cuckolds Have Horns?', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 71.4 (December 2008), 607-631 (p. 610).

[26] Mark Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 2.

[27] Ibid., p. 5.

[28] Barkan, p. 351.

[29] Katharine Eisaman Maus, 'Horns of Dilemma: Jealousy, Gender, and Spectatorship in English Renaissance Drama', *English Literary History*, 54.3 (Autumn 1987), 561-583 ('p. 575).

melancholy as being 'full of fear, anxiety, [and] doubt'.[30] His diagnosis encompasses the full spectrum of the vicissitudes of masculine existence:

> Of all passions […] love is most violent, and of those bitter potions which this love-melancholy affords, this bastard jealousy is the greatest […] For besides fear and sorrow, which is common to all melancholy, anxiety of mind, suspicion, aggravation, restless thoughts, paleness, meagreness, neglect of business, and the like, these men are farther yet misaffected, and in a higher strain.[31]

Following on from this examination, Burton concludes that 'this jealousy belongs as well to brute beasts, as men', and that 'it ought to be treated as a species apart'.[32] Burton's analysis of jealousy finds its most manifest rendering in Shakespeare's intense dramatisation of imaginary cuckoldry in *Othello* and *The Winter's Tale*. Whereas plays like Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* pay attention to the dishonour associated with a adulterous wife, Shakespeare is more concerned with trying to illuminate the psychological consequences of possible wifely infidelity on the husband's imagination. As such, the passage above supports Coppélia Kahn's argument that the 'vision' of Shakespearean marriage is one where 'wives turn whore and men become monsters'.[33] Women are imagined as inevitable sexual betrayers and men subsequently become the victims of that betrayal. In addition to being grotesque and potentially mutant, Burton also identifies in jealousy a spectre of terror that is tantamount to the anxiety associated with being cuckolded. This lends support to Mark Breitenberg's account of masculinity as being characterised by a burgeoning anxiety. Although masculine identity is heavily contingent on a wife's chastity, Shakespeare seems to attribute cuckoldry wholly to male insecurity rather than to female adultery. Jealousy forms an intrinsic component of both love and the masculine experience, so much so that it engenders an anxiety that consequently revolves around hegemonic desire over female sexuality.

The horns of the cuckold feature substantially as a symbol for the loss of a man's honour and his sexual potency. Most importantly, these horns serve as an indication of a wife's infidelity. The imagery surrounding horns illustrates the profound connection between anxious dread, jealous behaviour, and the absence of virility. Furthermore, these horns make the cuckold inhuman, animalistic, bestial; they create a metaphorical monster out of man. Othello adamantly declares 'a horned man's a monster and a beast'.[34] Iago famously invokes the cuckold's horns when he warns Othello of jealousy – that dangerous 'green-eyed monster' (III.3.170). Although this jealousy transforms the protean Othello into a horned monster, he is also perceived as a monster by Iago who reduces him into a savage barbarian because of his ethnic background, unique to the play's audience.

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[30] Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (London, 1621), PART. III, SECT. II, MEMB. III; retrieved from ProQuest: Early English Books Online <search.proquest.com/eebo> [accessed on 21 June 2021].

[31] Ibid., PART. III, SECT. III, MEMB. II.

[32] Ibid., PART. III, SECT. III, MEMB. I, SUBSECT. I.

[33] Kahn, p. 119.

[34] William Shakespeare, *Othello*, in *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), IV.1.60; subsequent references to this edition are incorporated into the text.

Othello's ethnicity garners highly racist remarks from other characters in the play that are loaded with bestial and sexual imagery. Referring to him as the 'Barbary horse' (I.1.113), Iago tells Brabantio that the 'old black ram / is topping your white ewe' (I.1.88-89) and that they 'are now making the beast with two backs' (I.1.117-18). Nevertheless, Othello – like Leontes – embodies the anxieties of early modern masculinity and his sexual mistrust is produced by a typical notion of masculine behaviour that is governed by a wife's chastity.

Indeed, the 'bloody passion' of jealousy 'shakes' Othello's 'very frame' (V.2.47). As *Othello* unfolds, the constant use of animal imagery reveals the destructive power that jealousy can have on the faculties of a husband's mind, namely irrational behaviour and pathological violence. In *The Winter's Tale*, Camillo advices jealous Leontes to relinquish his 'diseased opinion' of Hermione and Polixenes, for jealousy is a 'disease' and 'sickness' of the mind.[35] The monster of imagination plagues Othello and Leontes. When Othello and Iago discuss Desdemona's virtue, Othello remarks 'by heaven, [Iago] echoes me, / as if there were some monster in [his] thought / too hideous to be shown' (III.3.110-12). Not wanting to acknowledge the validity of Iago's monstrous thoughts about Desdemona's unfaithfulness, Othello instead unhelpfully broods incessantly over the horrifying idea of her infidelity. When Desdemona and Emilia deliberate about the whereabouts of the lost handkerchief, Emilia asserts that jealousy is a 'monster / begot upon itself, born on itself'; in response, Desdemona declares 'heaven keep that monster from Othello's mind' (III.4.158-60). Emilia's postulation holds the very key to the tragedy of the play which is that Othello's projected masculine anxiety on Desdemona is self-producing and ungrounded. Culminating in his trance, Othello's jealousy becomes so intense that it induces a fit of epilepsy that resembles a frenzied beast, 'he foams at mouth' and 'breaks out to savage madness' (IV, 1. 52-53). Just like Leontes, Othello's suspicions are sprung into his mind by the monster of imagination, forcing irrational assumptions. Camillo remarks that Leontes, like Othello, is 'in rebellion against himself' (I.2.356). Cuckoldry here acts as a spectre, an unwanted and distressing feeling of terror whose invisible shadow looms large over the Shakespearean stage, its presence is only ever imagined and produces, as Iago says, a 'monstrous birth to the world's light' (I.3.396).

Jealousy and the anxious dread associated with cuckoldry, specifically the threat of woman endangering a man's reputation, features so frequently in the plays discussed that it reveals the fundamental tenets of masculine subjectivity and pathology, or what Katharine Eisman Maus sees as 'the instabilities and tensions of a patriarchal social order', one that can be understood through psychology.[36] This subjectivity is centred on the close observance of female behaviour and is largely reliant on restraining it, even seeing it. This exercise is only possible through the patriarchal economy and the masculine construction of woman as Other. Valerie Traub notes that 'Shakespeare's preoccupation with the uncontrollability of women's sexuality […] was not individual to him, but a shared

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[35] William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, in *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), I.2.298; subsequent references to this edition are incorporated into the text.
[36] Maus, p. 561.

vulnerability of men in his intensely patriarchal and patrilineal culture'.[37] Othello's and Leontes' necessary participation in, and conformity to, the tenets of this patriarchal economy produces their anxieties and identities. They enter the Lacanian symbolic order. Since it operates on the level of the signifier, not being able to see such linguistic signs in this system is terrifying for Othello and Leontes. But this system places control of female sexuality at the heart of the prevailing code of manhood and, as a result, their masculine identity sits in uneasy tension because of their imaginary cuckoldry. This process functions as a particularly telling apparatus for examining the cultural anxieties of the period. No actual cuckoldry ever takes place in these plays. Instead, because of the way the patriarchal system is organised, the fantasy of cuckoldry − one that is associated with marital betrayal − is regarded as a very real, inevitable threat and is thus the main cause of the anxieties in these plays.

Centred around the mystery of woman as Other, the plays are ultimately characterised by the torment of misunderstanding and withheld knowledge. Accusations of adulterous slander propel the narratives. Othello's actions and anxieties are largely produced by Iago's malcontent plotting. Iago uses the spectre of cuckoldry as his *modus operandi* to instil anxiety and subsequently transform Othello into a jealous monster. Breitenberg notes that the anxiety produced in *Othello* is engendered by a 'crisis in interpretive knowledge about women and their sexuality'.[38] Likewise, in *The Winter's Tale*, Leontes also makes the mistake of misinterpretation. Hearing that Camillo and Polixenes have fled, Leontes' suspicions about a plot against him grow much greater:

> Alack, for lesser knowledge! how accursed
>
> In being so blest! There may be in the cup
>
> A spider steep'd, and one may drink, depart,
>
> And yet partake no venom, for his knowledge
>
> Is not infected: but if one present
>
> The abhorr'd ingredient to his eye, make known
>
> How he hath drunk, he cracks his gorge, his sides,
>
> With violent hefts. I have drunk, and seen the spider. (II.1.40-47)

Leontes compares Hermione to a wine cup and the spider acts as a metaphor for the fatal knowledge of her adultery, possession of which acts as an especially painful inward poison. This 'lesser knowledge' is Leontes' downfall and makes him believe that 'all's true that is mistrusted' (II.2.50). Similar imagery is used in *Othello* when Iago talks of how he will 'ensnare as great a fly as Cassio' in his 'web' of deceptive schemes (II.1.171-72). Breitenberg follows Stanley Cavell's explanation of Othello's mistrust as evolving from

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Cartesian scepticism. Cavell notes 'that the integrity of my (human, finite) existence may depend upon the fact and on the idea of another being's existence'.[39] Othello's existence, Cavell contends, is threatened by Desdemona but her presence, or rather her sexuality, in effect brings his very self into being. Again, the action of seeing confers authority, and knowledge produced from this vision becomes a masculine product of 'exclusive possession' over woman.[40] As Maus demonstrates, Othello demands 'ocular proof' but this 'does not exist and could never exist' because of the theatre's 'taboo' for representing sexual intercourse.[41] Iago's account is also situated in the realm of signifiers where everything is unknowable, thus driving Othello towards his destruction as he attempts to validate his mistrust of Desdemona.

The credulous Othello is susceptible and spirals into annihilation when he believes Iago's fabricated lies regarding Desdemona's fidelity. However, Iago also engages alongside him with this fantasy of cuckoldry to the point where he imagines scenarios with Emilia. His sexual possessiveness of Emilia is registered when he grows concerned over the prospect of her having a lover which 'doth like a poisonous mineral gnaw my inwards' (II.2.296). Iago taunts Othello with sexual images of Desdemona, 'in Venice they do let God see the pranks / they dare not show their husbands; their best conscience / is not to leave't undone, but keep't unknown' (III.3.206-08). It is precisely this 'unknown' element in female sexuality, this mystery of woman, that produces such anxiety. The need to see sexuality is an impossible dilemma in these plays: it is 'invisible but horrid'. In order to measure the chasteness of their beloveds, the male protagonists rely on hand cues. Both plays focus on hands as indicators of sexuality. Taking Will Fisher's materialist criticism into account, the male protagonists become entirely obsessed with hands. Fisher remarks that the handkerchief in *Othello* is 'linked with the female protagonist's continence, and more specifically with male anxiety about that continence'.[42] He also states that it is an important stage prop that is loaded with potential gendered meanings, ultimately becoming an extended prosthetic of the woman's hand. Its detachability, argues Fisher, is used by Iago in order to 'reinforce […] women's profligacy'.[43] Likewise, Leontes makes the same visual misinterpretation by seeing Hermione's 'white hand' as a 'paddling palm' (I.2.117).

As well as being defined by the ability to control female sexuality, masculinity in the period is also deeply characterised by a sexual rivalry between men. For Breitenberg, 'anxiety' and, by extension, cuckoldry 'is largely a discourse articulated and played out between men, a way for men to confirm their identity through a shared language of suffering and distress'.[44] Cuckoldry is as much a homosocial struggle between men, centred around

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[39] Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge In Seven Plays of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 127.

[40] Ibid., p. 10.

[41] Maus, p. 575.

[42] Will Fisher, *Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 44.

[43] Ibid., p. 57.

[44] Breitenberg, p. 12; Cf., Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

possession of the female, as it is an expression of female sexuality. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick explains, the 'bond of cuckoldry' is definitive of masculinity since it emphasises 'heterosexual love' as a 'strategy of homosocial desire'.[45] This is clearly evident in Leontes and Polixenes: two childhood friends who have now entered an adult world where man is pitted against man in a conflict where the prize is woman. The signs of a rivalry between them, however, are dubious and are only ever perceived by Leontes' imagination. This confirms Kahn's view of cuckoldry as a 'masculine fantasy of feminine betrayal' in Shakespeare's plays.[46] She further asserts that, in Othello, Iago uses the cuckoldry motif to establish a 'bond between himself and the Moor based on their mutual fantasy of women as betrayers and men as sexual rivals'.[47] Moreover, it supports Freud's view that jealousy is 'experienced bisexually' where the victim envisages himself in place of his rival and his lover.[48] Once Polixenes and Hermione leave the stage, Leontes feels the inevitable horns sprouting − a 'fork'd one' grows 'inch-thick' over his forehead and ears (I.1.187). He fears that 'to mingle friendship far is mingling bloods' (I.2.111); the intimacy that Leontes and Polixenes have shared since their youth contributes to Leontes' sexual jealousy.

Leontes expresses this sexual competition in his famous soliloquy through the image of neighbours prying on each other's wives:

> There have been,
>
> Or I am much deceived, cuckolds ere now;
>
> And many a man there is, even at this present,
>
> Now while I speak this, holds his wife by the arm,
>
> That little thinks she has been sluiced in's absence
>
> And his pond fish'd by his next neighbour, by
>
> Sir Smile, his neighbour: nay, there's comfort in't
>
> Whiles other men have gates and those gates open'd,
>
> As mine, against their will.
>
> (I.2.191-99)

Leontes is reassured by the fact that many men before him have had unfaithful wives. Constructing a brotherhood centred on married men, Leontes acknowledges that all men find a correspondence through the horn − an emblem of marriage. The angling imagery presents an assemblage of competitive sport which revolves around the ability to catch.

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[45] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 49-50.
[46] Kahn, p. 120.
[47] Ibid., p. 140.
[48] Sigmund Freud, 'Certain Neurotic Mechanisms in Jealousy, Paranoia, and Homosexuality', in *Collected Papers* (London: Hogarth, 1924), 2:232-40.

Again, the idea of women being objects of consumption is presented in this passage. Moreover, Leontes' growing mistrust over Hermione's chastity promotes Gail Kern Paster's argument that women are uncontrollable 'leaky vessels' that release more water than men. The imbalance of humoural nature in women resulted in their promiscuity in the early modern period.[49] Before Othello kills Desdemona, he exclaims she is 'false as water' and so 'must die, else she'll betray more men' (V.2.143; 6). Leontes exclaims 'women say so, / that will say anything. But were they false / as o'er-dyed blacks, as wind, as waters' (I.2.132-34). Similarly, Iago tells Othello the fears that he already has regarding women's sexuality:

> Good sir, be a man;
>
> Think every bearded fellow that's but yoked
>
> May draw with you: there's millions now alive
>
> That nightly lie in those unproper beds
>
> Which they dare swear peculiar: your case is better.

> (IV.1.64-78)

Iago participates in this shared masculine experience when he tells Othello that all marriages contain yoked husbands and unfaithful wives. The many 'millions' of betrayed men parallels Leontes' words about unknowing husbands. Shakespeare, in both plays, thus emphasises the homosocial bonds between men in cuckoldry by implicating that men are the only assailants against one another.

After the seeds of jealousy are planted in his head, Leontes becomes deeply preoccupied with the legitimacy of his own progeny. Fearing that his own son may be a bastard, Leontes becomes enveloped by the thought of Hermione bearing a child for Polixenes and calls into question the legitimacy of her pregnancy. Leontes repeatedly asks Mamillius whether or not he is his 'boy' or 'calf', examining his physiognomy in order to determine if he is a genetic 'copy' of himself (I.2.122-29). Traub analyses the anxieties within the play, noting that 'the anxieties of Leontes are the anxieties of a masculine culture in which women's bodies possess enormous powers of signification'.[50] Hermione's pregnancy acts as a visual indicator to Leontes' imaginary cuckoldry. Traub's reading also extends to metaphorical displacements of 'sexually threatening women' into statues and corpses which further reasserts her argument of the phenomena of the early modern masculine need for containment.[51] This containment is needed in order to allow men to perpetuate their sense of manhood. Since cuckoldry more often than not involved the birth of illegitimate children, fostering such offspring threatened the husband's patrilineal integrity. Leontes' desire to contain this threat would hinder any sort of humiliation gathering around his name. Furthermore, Leontes also sees Hermione as an object of

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[49] Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 25.

[50] Traub, p. 44.

[51] Ibid., p. 49.

desire that he believes Polixenes is wearing 'like a medal, hanging | about his neck' (I.2.309-10). The analogy of military and, therefore, masculine competition is further invoked here. Again, he believes his reputation is on the line and he scolds his retinue for not possessing the 'eyes / to see alike mine honour as their profits' (I.2.311-12). Othello similarly sees Desdemona as an object of sexual proclivity: 'the purchase made, the fruits are to ensue; / that profit's yet to come 'tween me and you' (II.3.9-10). Like Hermione's magical fate, Othello feeds his fear of women's sexuality through containment of property, casting them as 'monumental alabaster' – incomprehensible, artificial, false, and not what they appear to be, yet at the same time memorials to their masculine status (V.2.5).

Depicting the gradual descent toward anxiety and sexual jealousy on the husband's imagination, *Othello* and *The Winter's Tale* both illustrate the significance of female chastity in relation to masculine honour. *Othello* is undoubtedly one of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies. *The Winter's tale* is a 'problem play' since it combines elements of tragedy and comedy, but cuckoldry nevertheless functions as a tragic medium in these plays. Othello's and Leontes' chronic paranoia is directed towards the realm of beasts for they are 'tenderly […] led by th' nose / as asses' (*Othello*, I.3.393-94). Shakespeare foregrounds the psychological realism of the male protagonists by converting their fears of cuckoldry into a tragic theme, one which stems from their desire to imagine female infidelity. Perhaps in the end, Othello and Leontes echo Samuel Johnson's words: 'he who makes a beast of himself gets rid of the pain of being a man'.[52]

'O most lame and impotent conclusion!'

Throughout Renaissance drama, even when fidelity is not a theme, allusions to the cuckold are frequently invoked, producing a mirth that is located in the defiled honour of a wronged husband whose actions provide a source of derision. But, more intrinsically, such allusions highlight an endemic fear in western cultures that is associated with infidelity. Possessing both comic and tragic themes, cuckoldry is multifaceted which is evident by the different genres it subsumes, but what connects the plays together is that they ultimately portray men presupposing female virtue as an integral condition towards their own sense of masculine identity, the corruption of which will strip them of their manhood. Articulating the notion that women are inherently lustful, the plays expound that masculinity is elusive by placing a misogynistic emphasis on male anxiety towards female sexuality. Even when chaste wives are found, the fact that their husbands still anticipate such visions of betrayal constitute fears that, like the horns, are 'invisible but horrid'. Because the commonplace notion of men finding property in women validates their masculinity, the plays also illustrate men who protect their wives through appropriation of her body, configured in terms of the male gaze. Wives are merely extensions of the husband, relative only to him as Other. The jealous monster is unable to recognise his own imagined cuckoldry; his tragedy stems from his inability to interpret

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[52] Samuel Johnson, 'Anecdotes of the Revd. Percival Stockdale' *Johnsonian Miscellanies* Vol II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897) p. 333.

correctly. This figure demonstrates that female chastity is a prerequisite for masculine honour to be achieved.

Since women have virtue, which, once lost, can never be restored, the spectre of cuckoldry is one which consumes every male protagonist because they all enact, in their minds, the scene of their own betrayal. This is further perpetuated by those who threaten the male protagonists with 'allegations of cuckoldry and aspersions […] against the chastity of [their wives]', which acts as 'weapons for those seeking to dishonour him'.[53] Cuckoldry as an insult stems from the notion that failure to restrain a woman's sexuality results in the loss of male honour and identity. Furthermore, jealousy also features in both plays, expressing cuckoldry's homosocial nature. As well as being a measure of manhood, female sexuality is ultimately the lynchpin which secures order in the social networks. The perceived corruption of female chastity results in a crisis in the domestic household. Like the Actaeon narrative, cuckoldry is, in a way, 'female domination' since any form of 'female sovereignty over sexuality' amounted to 'subversion', placing ignominy onto the husband.[54] While blame may lie on the wronged husband, cuckoldry and the anxiety associated with its spectre is deeply misogynistic. Carol Thomas Neely writes that although the discourse 'acknowledges the power of women's sexuality', it nevertheless 'subordinates' and 'denigrates' women by assuming their promiscuity.[55] Cuckoldry displays the anxious fantasy of male characters towards women's sexuality as an index of their transgression.

The belief that looking, or rather the quest for truth and certainty, is somehow poisonous rings true in all the plays we have discussed. Like Actaeon, both Othello and Leontes are unmanned for either attempting to seek out knowledge of their wife's fidelity or engaging with voyeuristic fetishism, both of which arises from 'cuckoldry anxiety' where there is, according to Mark Breitenberg, both 'a need to know and a need to see'.[56] So intense is this anxiety that Othello and Leontes imagine inward visions of their own cuckolding. Claire McEachern states that 'Actaeon is perhaps the most apt emblem of soteriological anxiety stemming from the difficulty of discovering information about yourself […] Cuckolds, by contrast, wear a sign that others in their community can see'.[57] Brabantio tells Othello: 'look to [Desdemona], Moor, if thou hast eyes to see: / she has deceived her father, and may thee' (I.3.292-93). In addition to being an assault on the foundation of his masculinity, cuckoldry is also an attack on a man's visual faultiness.

Michel Foucault argues that sexuality 'has been linked from the outset with the intensification of the body − with its exploitation as an object of knowledge and an

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[53] Carolyn Strange, Robert Cribb, Christopher E. Forth, *Honour, Violence and Emotions in History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 11.
[54] McEachern, p. 616.
[55] Carol Thomas Neely, *Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare's Plays* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 7.
[56] Breitenberg, p. 187.
[57] McEachern, p. 620.

element in relations of power'.[58] These plays all have male protagonists who instinctively protect their masculinities by possessing an excessive desire to control, contain, and command the female body as either a way to wield authority — perpetuating 'defensive structures of dominance' as Valerie Traub states — or as a way to gain knowledge of chastity, thereby regulating their wives' sexuality.[59] Traub further notes that, in the Shakespearean canon, 'male anxiety toward female erotic power is channelled into a strategy of containment'.[60] It is through this strategy, one that is operated through the male gaze which treats the wife as a husband's property, that we find masculinity's primary defence mechanism, his main source of masculine power. In his work on dissection, Jonathan Sawday makes the point that 'female bodies were not just cut up within anatomy theatres … they were cut up in literary texts … as a specifically male knowledge of women'.[61] It is through the female body that man defends his honour, and it is the quest for the truth over her chastity which compels him to institute the scene of his betrayal as a coping device (regardless of whether it is imaginary or real) thus perpetuating the spectre of cuckoldry. For, on the Renaissance stage, the cuckold is forbidden to see the act, confirming his fears of women's sexuality — 'invisible but horrid'.

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[58] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. I, trans. by Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), p. 107.
[59] Traub, p. 48.
[60] Ibid., p. 26.
[61] Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 201.

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Gender Trouble: The Representation of the Intersexed Body in Anglo-American Culture

Emma Hanson

Artwork: Jenna Ventress, 2020

Intersex is an umbrella term which refers to a range of different genetic variations in sexual or reproductive anatomy, affecting approximately 1 in 2000 births.[1] The intersex experience typically exists outside of the gender binary, as intersex people may have the biological attributes of both sexes or lack the biological characteristics considered male or female.[2] Jeffrey Eugenides's 2002 novel *Middlesex* is an epic narrative that winds together family history, immigration narratives, and explorations of gender and identity.[3] This article focuses on the intersex narrative in the novel, as Eugenides charts the social and personal consequences of the protagonist Cal's intersex experience.[4] Non-fiction testimonies by intersexed authors provide parallel explorations of the intersex body.

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[1] Intersexed Society of North America, <https://isna.org> [accessed 15 March 2020].

[2] Organisation Intersex International, <http://oiiinternational.com/2533/welcome/> [accessed 02 June 2021].

[3] Jeffrey Eugenides, *Middlesex* (London: Fourth Estate, 2013). All further references are to this edition.

[4] Throughout this article, I refer to Cal using his male name and male pronouns. Cal's own decision to live as a boy and the retrospective nature of this narrative from the male perspective have informed this decision.

Chrysalis: Journal of Transgressive Gender Identities (1997) gives voice to intersex people through journalistic and creative writing.[5] In the documentaries *Gender Trouble* (2012) and *Intersexion* (2013), intersex people speak openly about their experiences.[6] The differences between fiction and non-fiction must be noted; Eugenides has spent time crafting and revising his words for an intended readership, whereas the interviews in *Gender Trouble* and *Intersexion* are spontaneous, momentary responses. It is also significant to note the limitations of Eugenides's perspective in writing as a gender conforming, cis male using an outsider lens to explore the intersex experience, whereas the interviews present the first-hand experience of intersex people. Whilst these are significant differences, this article will handle both fiction and non-fiction as literary artefacts in order to facilitate a side-by-side analysis, arguing that Eugenides's novel ultimately takes a normative approach to exploring the intersex experience by adhering to the gender binary.

Whilst the intersex body can evade the gender binary, articulating the intersex experience cannot escape the language which is created by and for a binary society. The assumptions and stereotypes that pervade the articulation and reception of a narrative contribute to its meaning; negative language circumscribes the intersex experience in *Middlesex* and in non-fiction testimonies, which is symptomatic of a wider societal and medical reaction to the non-normative. Thus, a critical exploration of the presentation of intersex identity cannot overlook the hegemonic gender and sexual norms which contribute to understandings of the intersexed body. Whilst these norms are hegemonic, they are also problematic and harmful, as an exploration of the effect of the social pressure to conform will demonstrate. This article endeavours to explore the presentation of intersex subjectivity and its relationship to medical knowledge, whilst simultaneously resisting the pathologization of the intersex body. The word 'condition' is sometimes used but I aim to do so without accepting or perpetuating the medicalisation of the intersex experience.

I was initially drawn to a study of intersex literature due to the challenge of narrating the non-normative body. As I delved into my exploration of the intersex experience and its representation, it quickly became evident how my view of the intersexed body was clouded by my own internalisation of the hegemonic gender norm. This article will explore three key aspects in *Middlesex* and in non-fiction writing: the language circumscribing the intersex identity; the emotional repercussions of medical diagnosis; and finally, how heterosexual norms inform medical intersex treatment. This article will demonstrate that the intersex experience is understood in relation to, and is dictated by, gender norms.

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[5] *Chrysalis: Journal of Transgressive Gender Identities,* ed. by Cheryl Chase, 2, 5 (1997), <https://isna.org/books/chrysalis/> [accessed 16 February 2020].
[6] Roz Mortimer, dir., *Gender Trouble*, online documentary, Kanopy, 2012, <https://bristol.kanopy.com/video/gender-trouble> [accessed 2 April 2020]; Grant Lahood and John Kier, dir., *Intersexion*, online documentary, Kanopy, 2013, <https://bristol.kanopy.com/node/108118/preview> [accessed 2 April 2020].

The Monster: How Societal Intolerance Defines the Intersex Identity

Stephanie Hsu talks about the 'sliding chain of signification' that leads to Cal's discovery of the word 'monster', yet a wider examination of the perception of the intersex body is necessary to understand the persecutory language associated with it.[7] Discussing her experience of being an intersex woman in the documentary *Gender Trouble*, Saraswati provides her impression of the terminology surrounding her experience:

> I actually find hermaphrodite to be a rather poetic word, and I prefer it to some of the more clinical things. I would like it to be reclaimed though because it does have a hint of freakishness to it, and I don't think we need to think about these conditions as being freakish.[8]

The suggestion of what is poetic and what is freakish opens up a discussion on the connotations surrounding the language that designates the intersex experience. Judith Butler's *Undoing Gender* theorises the constraints of language, as a description such as Saraswati's 'takes place in a language that is already going on, that is already saturated with norms, that predisposes us as we seek to speak of ourselves'.[9] Distilling this theory into a concise question, Butler asks 'who can I become in such a world where the meanings and limits of the subject are set out in advance for me'?[10] Saraswati's ideas about intersex terminology are already in conversation with pre-established expectations of what is normal, and are reflected in how she speaks about herself. It is significant to acknowledge here the role that medical practices and the power of the medical gaze plays in perpetuating ideas of anatomical normativity. Black Hawk Hancock notes the tendency to 'mistakenly theorize medicine as objective, neutral, and without investment in securing its own authority and legitimation', recognising the way that medical conventions use flawed anatomical and biological reasoning to circumscribe the normative body.[11] Thus while social understandings of gender norms norm contribute to the persecutory view of the intersex body, it is significant to understand how the social expectations are indubitably influenced by, and are in conversation with, medical practices.

In *Middlesex*, Eugenides uses mythology to circumscribe the intersex body, which contributes to the 'sliding chain of signification' that leads to the use of the word 'monster'. The mythologization of intersex is seen most explicitly in Octopussy's Garden, where a narrative regarding the origins of the intersex body is constructed for the audience: 'Once upon a time in ancient Greece, there was an enchanted pool […] behold

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[7] Stephanie Hsu, 'Ethnicity and the Biopolitics of Intersex in Jeffrey Eugenides's 'Middlesex'', *MELUS*, 3, 36 (2011), 87-110 <www.jstor.org/stable/23035264> [accessed 25 January 2020], p. 91.

[8] Mortimer, *Gender Trouble*.

[9] Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), in *ProQuest*, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bristol/detail.action?docID=183001> [accessed 16 February 2020], p. 69.

[10] Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 58.

[11] Black Hawk Hancock, 'Michel Foucault and the Problematics of Power: Theorizing DTCA and Medicalized Subjectivity', *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy: A Forum for Bioethics and Philosophy of Medicine*, 43 (2018), 439-468 <https://doi.org/10.1093/jmp/jhy010> [accessed 03 June 2021], p. 455.

the god Hermaphroditus'.[12] The clichéd phrase 'once upon a time' at the sentence's opening creates a realm in which the mystical is allowed and revered. The intersex person becomes something fantastic, othered from the human realm through the language choices of 'enchanted' and 'god'; Saraswati's remark about the poetic sound of the word 'hermaphrodite' becomes literalised in Eugenides's depiction of the intersexed body. Debra Shostak recognises that Eugenides has 'intuition of the need to devise figures of the newly thinkable with which to rescue the hermaphrodite from the position of the strange', but Eugenides pushes his intersex protagonist *further* into the 'position of the strange' through his use of mythology to explain Cal's body. [13] Shostak observes that the intersex experience does not 'readily translate into the language of representation'.[14] This mythologization is an attempt to represent a body for which there is not a pre-existing 'language of representation'. As the idea of the norm forces the intersex person into the position of the other, descriptions of this unfamiliar intersex experience move into the language of 'freak' and 'monster'.

Saraswati's testimony picks up on the associations of the freakish, which pervades both fiction and non-fiction intersex accounts. 'Freakish' is defined as something curious or grotesque, linked etymologically to the word 'freak', which in its full meaning can mean an abnormally developed individual, or a 'freak of nature'.[15] Despite its persecutory modern associations, Robert Bogdan explores the productive associations of the label 'freak'; from 1840-1940, freak shows were organised for the 'amusement and profit of people with physical, mental and behavioural anomalies', and were an accepted part of American culture.[16] People with mental and physical differences presented themselves as 'human wonders', suggesting the potentially empowering aspect of freak shows, and demonstrating how this term is not as simplistically negatively charged as modern definitions imply.[17]

The association between the intersex identity and the word 'freak' speaks to view of the intersexed body as an outlier to the norm. Cal's 'position of the strange' is reinforced through Eugenides's difficulty in articulating and representing the intersex body. Cal's diagnosis in *Middlesex* coincides with his discovery of the word 'monster' in the dictionary, conflating his experience of his body with this definition: 'the synonym was official, authoritative; it was the verdict that the culture gave on a person like her. *Monster.* That was what she was. That was what Dr. Luce and his colleagues had been saying. It explained so much, really'.[18] This line from the novel comes into conversation with Butler's theory; the established verdict of the 'culture' is contained in the knowledge and authority of the

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[12] Eugenides, *Middlesex*, p. 482.
[13] Debra Shostak, ''Theory Uncompromised by Practicality': Hybridity in Jeffrey Eugenides' 'Middlesex.'', *Contemporary Literature*, 3, 49 (2008), 383-412 <www.jstor.org/stable/27563803> [accessed 25 January 2020], p. 391.
[14] Ibid., p. 388.
[15] OED Online, s.v. 'freakish, adj.', <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/74348>, accessed 08.05.2020.
[16] Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 25.
[17] Ibid., p. 504.
[18] Eugenides, *Middlesex*, p. 431.

dictionary, lending force to this new definition which Cal finds for himself and augmenting a persecutory perspective of his non-normative body. The personal impact of the word on Cal's sense of being is conveyed through the short, declarative sentences, demonstrating the assimilation of this definition into his sense of self. Characters with identities outside social norms often recourse to establishing their identity by reading themselves in literature, as they are denied role models in society.[19] Cal's reading of 'monster' comes into conversation with this literary tradition, but enforces the negative consequences of living beyond gender norms through the damaging language he discovers. The association of the intersex experience with the terms 'freak' and 'monster' speaks to the modern persecutory associations of 'freak', rather than the productive history of the term as demonstrated by Bogdan.

Non-fiction testimonies fall back into this same language of 'monster' and 'freak'. In *Chrysalis: Journal of Transgressive Gender Identities*, Morgan Holmes remarks, 'I couldn't shake the feeling that I was a monster', suggesting how external perceptions of the intersex experience have similarly shaped her self-image.[20] Bo and Lynell from the documentary *Intersexion* further demonstrate how societal reactions support their self-definition as a 'freak'. Bo reports that 'people treated me like a freak […] they caused me to feel like my body is disgusting', while Lynell states that they 'didn't want [to be] what I was called at school […] a freak'.[21] These multiple testimonies answer Butler's question about who you can become when the 'meanings and limits of the subject are set out in advance'.[22] The connotations of 'monster' and 'freak' are of something inhuman, not tolerable, scary, and outside understanding. This language is a symptom of a much larger societal understanding of what is normal, and a rejection of that which falls short of gender norms. The 'meanings and limits of the subject' are seen in relation to this understanding of what is normal: sitting outside the social understanding of gendered binaries does not facilitate positive language, and instead falls back on that which criticizes this difference.

The language of the freakish is literalised in Octopussy's Garden, where Cal becomes an 'ever-freakier performer' in the exploitative strip show.[23] This freak show in *Middlesex* provides an acute example of common reactions to the intersexed body, as it capitalises on societal stupefaction with the non-normative. In Octopussy's Garden, 'faces filled the portholes, gazing with amazement, curiosity, disgust, desire'.[24] Cal describes himself as 'predated' by the strip show, and references his 'sense of shame' at presenting his body to strangers.[25] His reaction to his employment at Octopussy's garden demonstrates that

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[19] For an early historical example of self-discovery through literature, see: Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness* (St Ives: Virago Press, 2002), p. 207.

[20] Morgan Holmes, 'Is Growing Up in Silence Better Than Growing Up Different?', *Chrysalis: Journal of Transgressive Gender Identities*, 2, 5 (1997), 7-9, <https://isna.org/books/chrysalis/> [accessed 16 February 2020], p. 9.

[21] Lahood, *Intersexion*.

[22] Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 58.

[23] Eugenides, *Middlesex*, p. 484.

[24] Eugenides, *Middlesex*, p. 491.

[25] Ibid., p. 484, p. 483.

this freak show is exploitative and humiliating rather than something for 'amusement and profit'.[26] Negative reactions to the intersexed body also surface in the park assault, when the men act as though Cal is 'contaminated'.[27] These responses to Cal's non-normative appearance imply a reaction to something unusual, unfamiliar, or exotic – not a human body. Thus, his understanding of his body as monstrous is both influenced and mirrored by the reactions he sees in other people. His interior feeling is entangled with these external reactions. How can someone alter their self-perception when unavoidable glances such as these confirm their fears?

Cursory glances become full blown parading in the hospital, as the hospital bed becomes a free version of the perverted freak show.[28] Cal is introduced as a 'star attraction' in the hospital, which explicitly correlates with non-fiction testimonies.[29] The wife of an intersex man speaks in the documentary *Intersexion* of how they had a 'round-robin of residents' view his vaginoplasty, turning an intimate and traumatic surgery into an opportunity to stare.[30] This situation is paralleled almost exactly in Angela Moreno's account of her own hospitalisation where she was put 'on show for parades of earnest young residents with "you're-a-freak-but-we're-compassionate" grins on their faces'.[31] Doctors are using the intersex body as an opportunity to learn, dehumanizing the body into 'an object of analysis', but intersex accounts demonstrate how this uproots the intersex subject from the position of a 'normal' patient and enforces their 'position of the strange'.[32] The purpose of examining and gawking at the intersex body is not simply to measure its individual significance but to come closer to a more perfect understanding of how to quantify the body's needs and effectively 'cure' it. Thus whilst the intersex body provides an opportunity for doctors to better understand the variations of the human body, it is nevertheless perceived by intersex people as an invasive and traumatic breach of privacy, particularly due to the private nature of reproductive and sex organs. This tension between the medical perception and embodied experience of the intersex body explains Eugenides's description of Cal as an 'attraction' in the hospital and the fact that Moreno felt 'on show'. This othering of the patient feeds into a perpetual cycle of societal opinions circumscribing their identity as something freakish, as Moreno explicitly references her self-definition as a 'freak'.

The assumed psychological difficulty of living as an intersex person reinforces the negative perception of the intersexed body. In *Middlesex*, it is rumoured that intersex patients 'always met with tragic ends: they killed themselves, they ran off and became circus

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[26] Bogdan, *Freak Show,* p. 25.
[27] Eugenides, *Middlesex*, p. 476.
[28] Many have identified the medical documentary as the modern day equivalent of the freak show, see: David Clark and Catherine Myser, 'Being Humaned: medical Documentaries and the Hyperrealization of Conjoined Twins', in *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, ed. by Rosemarie Garland Thomson (New York: New York university Press, 1996), pp. 338-355.
[29] Eugenides, *Middlesex*, p. 420.
[30] Lahood, *Intersexion*.
[31] Angela Moreno, 'In Amerika They Call Us Hermaphrodites', *Chrysalis: Journal of Transgressive Gender Identities*, 2, 5 (1997), 11-12, <https://isna.org/books/chrysalis/> [accessed 16 February 2020], p.12.
[32] Hancock, 'Michel Foucault and the Problematics of Power', p. 443.

performers'.[33] Doctors present the intersex experience as something the patient is unable to live with and this suggested intolerability is reflected almost verbatim in Moreno's account of her own doctor's 'horror story about a girl like me who had peeked at her file once while the doctor was out of the room and then killed herself'.[34] The 'horror story' framing transplants real lives into literary explorations of the frightening, pushing the intersexed body further away from the realm of the human. Non-fiction attempts to represent the intersex experience in stories such as these reflect the mythologization of the intersexed body in *Middlesex*, thus even when the explicit language of the freakish is absent, the 'position of the strange' is maintained. Just as the authoritative dictionary confirmed Cal's assumptions about himself, the qualified and trusted position of the doctor in non-fiction accounts lends their depiction of the intersexed body an unquestionable authority. Why would a patient question their doctor's competency in substantiating that their body is freakish? The medical perpetuation of the 'meaning and limits' of intersex reinforces the intersex patient's 'position of the strange'. Ironically, the seemingly well-meaning concern for their psychological difficulty serves to confirm the patient's self-definition as a monster.

The negative emotional impact of persecutory language and the uncertainty of intersex manifests in feelings of shame. In *Middlesex,* Cal feels 'shame over having a body unlike other bodies'.[35] Linguistic parallels surface in non-fiction testimonies, as Bo analyses her feelings towards her body: 'I realized, that thing that's causing me to have such a miserable life is not the clitorectomy, it's the shame and that's wrong'.[36] 'Shame' is a feeling heavily influenced by societal expectations, thus it is significant in terms of the intersex experience as 'shame' is in conversation with gender norms. Eve Sedgwick writes, 'shame both derives from and aims towards sociability'.[37] She elaborates that shame is an 'identity-constituting identifactory communication', demonstrating how this feeling informs one's identity.[38] Bringing Sedgwick's conclusions on the nature of shame into conversation with the intersex body reveals the significance of this feeling in fiction writing and non-fiction testimonies. The 'sociability' of shame evidences its interaction with societal expectations and, in the case of the intersex person, societal gender norms. The weight of shame in terms of self-definition is also prominent, as Sedgwick makes clear the influence that shame has on one's self-image. This observation resonates with Butler's *Undoing Gender*, where she observes that gender norms 'become the means by which [they] see, the frame for [their] own seeing, the way of seeing [themselves]'.[39] Some

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[33] Eugenides, *Middlesex*, p. 117.

[34] Moreno, 'In Amerika They Call Us Hermaphrodites', p. 12.

[35] Eugenides, *Middlesex,* p. 494.

[36] Lahood, *Intersexion.*

[37] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2003), in *EBSCOhost* <http://search.ebscohost.com.bris.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=600096&site=ehost-live.> [accessed 5 May 2020], p. 37.

[38] Ibid., p. 36.

[39] Butler, *Undoing Gender,* p. 70.

intersex people see gender norms, and how far from this they are, producing a feeling of shame and subsequently informing their negative appellations.

Unpicking the language circumscribing the intersex experience demonstrates the 'sliding chain of signification' in *Middlesex* which results in Cal's discovery of the explicitly demeaning term 'monster'.[40] Butler asks, 'what, given the contemporary order of being, can I be?'.[41] The 'contemporary order of being' is set out in advance through societal intolerance of the non-normative, and is translated into the language of persecution. Damaging social reactions and the resulting feelings of shame permeate intersex people's perceptions of themselves, providing the answer to Butler's question that intersex people are 'freakish'. However, if the 'contemporary order of being' is altered to accept the non-normative, then the language associated with the intersex identity can become more positive and accepting. We can move away from the freakish and recognise intersex for what it is – the experience of particular anatomical realities.

The Movement: How Medical Diagnosis Alters the Perception of the Intersex Identity

The medical diagnosis of the intersex condition can allow intersexed people to acknowledge that their bodies are naturally anatomically different to accepted definitions of male and female, and can enable them to recognise that they are not alone in their anatomical differences. With diagnosis, supposedly 'objective' medical definitions – held apart from the often problematic medical *reactions* – displace societal reactions to become 'identity-constituting' knowledge.[42] The emotional impact of diagnosis can be analysed precisely in the changes to the language circumscribing the intersex experience: in *Middlesex, Intersexion* and *Gender Trouble*, the shift from understanding their intersex bodies as non-normative and unacceptable to a naturally occurring variation generates feelings of relief. It is also significant to consider that the pathologization of the intersex body could have negative psychological effects, or some diagnoses could lead to damaging information about the individual's health. Hil Malatino observes that 'receiving a diagnosis of this sort whittles down the complexity of subjective realities', which is realised in a positive way in *Middlesex* and the documentaries as the intersex people presented and interviewed demonstrate a positive reaction to diagnosis.[43]

In *Middlesex,* Cal reflects on his discovery of the exact nature of his condition: 'not long ago I'd fretted over my failure to develop. That worry was gone now. I didn't have to live up to that standard anymore. The impossible demands had been removed and I felt a vast relief'.[44] Having previously defined himself as having a 'problematic body', his diagnosis mitigates his frustration and confusion.[45] The polarised descriptions of the emotions which Cal works through before and after his intersex diagnosis – from 'problematic body'

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[40] Stephanie Hsu, 'Ethnicity and the Biopolitics', p. 91.

[41] Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 58.

[42] Johnathan Y. Tsou, Alan Richardson and Flavia Padovani, *Objectivity in Science* (New York: Springer, 2015); Sedgwick, *Touching* Feeling, p. 36.

[43] Hil Malatino, *Queer Embodiment: Monstrosity, Medical Violence, and Intersex Experience* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2019), p. 22.

[44] Eugenides, *Middlesex*, p. 452.

[45] Ibid., p. 294.

to 'vast relief' – demonstrates a clear psychological difference and the use of the word 'vast' emphasises the gravity of this cathartic emotion. Relief is defined as an 'alleviation of or deliverance from distress, anxiety, or some other emotional burden'.[46] Psychologically, relief 'derives from situations in which an expected or previously experienced [negative feeling] is reduced or absent'.[47] In terms of the intersex experience, the negative feeling relates to the 'problematic body', to use Cal's description of his body. Medical knowledge dissipates the speculation surrounding the intersexed body and, as Malatino states, it reduces the 'complexity of subjective realities'.[48]

There is an interesting correlation between 'relief' in *Middlesex* and in non-fiction intersex accounts. Melissa, from the documentary *Gender Trouble*, recounts the moment she read her medical report:

> I opened it in private and read through it and was partly shocked and partly relieved. Partly relieved in that I now knew what my condition was exactly and why I'd had this surgery, and that it was an intersex condition.[49]

Another intersex woman, Barbara, narrates her moment of discovery in very similar terms: 'I was tremendously relieved after he told me everything because the truth was manageable'.[50] The relief that both of these intersex women feel is associated with the manageability of their 'exact' condition and the knowledge of the 'truth'. There is a correlation between relief and the acquisition of knowledge, as the speculation surrounding their differences evaporates with the authority of the medical report. Shostak's observation that the intersex experience does not 'readily translate into the language of representation' can augment an understanding of this feeling of relief.[51] While intersexed people continue to sit outside of hegemonic gender norms, the knowledge of their condition enables a medical self-definition which is no longer persecutory or speculative. However, a medical understanding of their body provides only one way of linguistically representing themselves and fixing stable identity constructions and it is not necessarily the first way to understand themselves. The interviews in *Intersexion* and *Gender Trouble* suggest that diagnosis has contributed to their personal identity, but it is necessary to consider that identities are not static or simplistic.

The presence of the medical report in *Middlesex*, in lieu of Cal's narration of the moment of discovery, focuses on the shift in self-definition which medical knowledge brings about. He is introduced to a medical 'language that is already going on', providing new 'limits' to his self-definition.[52] Stephanie Hsu comments on this precise moment in the narrative, concluding that 'the report allegorizes intersex medical intervention and formally reflects the construction of intersexed subjectivity at the moment of interpellation by the medical

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[46] OED Online, s.v. 'relief, n. 2', <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/161917>, [accessed 02.03.20].

[47] Roland Deutsch et al., 'How absent negativity relates to affect and motivation: an integrative relief model', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6 (2015).

[48] Malatino, *Queer Embodiment,* p. 22.

[49] Mortimer, *Gender Trouble*.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Shostak, 'Theory Uncompromised by Practicality'*,* p. 388.

[52] Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 69.

apparatus'.[53] This 'moment of interpellation' captures the point when the terms 'freak' and 'monster', which previously circumscribed the intersex identity, are replaced by authoritative medical knowledge. The certainty with which Cal defines himself as a result of his diagnosis is demonstrated in the short declarative statements with which he affirms his revised gender identity: 'I'm not a girl. I'm a boy. That's what I found out today'.[54] This echoes the medical report which recognises Cal as a 'genetic XY (male) raised as female', and the linguistic parallels between the medical and the personal identities demonstrate the absorption of this medical knowledge into Cal's sense of self.[55] Diagnosis replaces the persecutory societal reactions, and becomes a new 'way of seeing himself'.[56] Before understanding his body as intersexed, Cal emulates the biology of a girl by faking periods. Cal's shift from emulating female gender essentialism to performing hegemonic masculinity after his discovery of his intersex identity presents a normative binary frame which we should be critical of. *Middlesex* supports normative gender expectations, perpetuating social perceptions of male, female and precluding the recognition of non-binary genders. While Cal's diagnosis provides a sense of freedom from 'the impossible demands' of the gendered expectations he struggled with up to this point, we must be critical of the gender binary which Eugenides adheres to.[57]

Comparing non-fiction intersex accounts with Eugenides's fictional depiction of the moment of diagnosis reveals the problematic way that Eugenides slides back into the gender binary when Cal revises his gender identity. Barbara and Melissa from *Gender Trouble* define themselves as female, and their diagnosis as intersex does not alter this, instead providing 'relief' at knowing the truth of their biology. Tiger and Mani from *Intersexion,* however, use their diagnosis to evade the gender binary and define themselves as intersex. Tiger asserts that 'the truth of my identity is that I'm an intersex person', and Mani similarly 'proudly identifies as neither male nor female […] I'm an intersex person'.[58] Non-fiction accounts of intersex people demonstrate a revised identity but never a completely *altered* identity. In contrast, Cal's transition from living as female to living as male draws attention to the gender binary by moving across it. His feelings of relief surface from his new self-definition, but also from his escape from the imposed norms that come with living as a girl. His decision to live as a boy, however, does not provide escape from the imposed gender norms of masculinity in which he subsequently immerses himself. Thus the presence of relief in correlation with the gender binary suggests a problematic reliance on gender norms in *Middlesex* and demonstrates that Eugenides reinforces the hegemonic gender binary system.

Despite the problematic perpetuation of gender binaries, Eugenides does succeed in presenting the psychological impact of diagnosis in a way which correlates with non-fiction accounts. Diagnosis provides the intersex patient with a way of seeing themselves

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[53] Hsu, 'Ethnicity and Biopolitics', p. 90.

[54] Eugenides, *Middlesex*, p. 439.

[55] Ibid., p. 435.

[56] Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 69.

[57] Eugenides, *Middlesex,* p. 452.

[58] Lahood, *Intersexion.*

that is divorced from negative language and societal criticism of their non-normative bodies. These people continue to live outside gendered norms, but the application of a medical term to their intersex experience provides them with a new 'language of representation' with which to define themselves. Diagnosis lessens the negative psychological impact of the intersex experience; speculation and shame are replaced by relief. In the subsequent years since *Middlesex* and the documentaries were created, there has been an increased cultural focus on the language of the non-binary. The emergence of non-binary language within the Anglo-American context facilitates a movement towards self-definition with non-gendered pronouns, rather than medical terminologies, and provides a new way to define the intersex body which is divorced from pathological understandings of intersex. If these non-binary terms had been culturally prominent during the time of writing, would it have altered Eugenides's depiction of his intersex protagonist? Would Cal have successfully evaded the gender binary? These recent gender-neutral terms destabilise hegemonic gender norms, enabling us to look towards a society where non-normative bodies are accepted.

The Medical: How Heteronormative Medical Expectations Inform Intersex Identity

Whilst diagnosis of the intersex condition can provide one way for intersex people to understand their body, there are problematic heteronormative elements to medical treatment. Malatino observes that 'practical [medical] protocols are built upon conservative typologies of maleness and femaleness'; normative medical practices and assumptions about sex and sexuality are informed by the gender binary and latent homophobia, so heterosexuality becomes a driving force in medical treatment.[59] J Jack Halberstam posits that 'notions of [sexual] orientation are saturated with assumptions about the normative, the right, the conventional'.[60] Both Malatino's and Halberstam's observations about social norms are evident in medical treatment; autobiographical accounts relay examples of medical intervention that conflate sex treatment with the presupposed heterosexuality of the patient. Whilst intersex individuals can identify as heterosexual, for those who do not, heterosexuality provides further norms which they do not fit in to.

In *Intersexion,* Jen states that doctors told her she needed corrective surgery 'so that you could have normal sex with your husband when you're older'.[61] Ester similarly reports that 'I was then told that I would have to have surgery so that I could have a normal sex life with my husband when I got married'.[62] Sexuality precedes gender as it becomes a precondition for cisgender identities in a heteronormative society. The doctors refer to 'normal sex', meaning heterosexual sex, as the overriding purpose to their treatment of intersex; heterosexuality becomes 'the normative, the right, the conventional' in medical practice. Butler augments a discussion of normative sexuality as she concludes that 'to

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[59] Malatino, *Queer Embodiment*, p. 19.
[60] J Jack Halberstam, *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the End of Normal* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012), p. 84.
[61] Lahood, *Intersexion.*
[62] Ibid.

have a gender means to have entered already into a heterosexual relationship of subordination'.[63] In both Jen and Ester's testimonies, the medical establishment simultaneously assumes heterosexuality and perpetuates gender power imbalances through the prioritisation of male sexual pleasure. Alice Dreger recognises that 'a significant motivation for the biomedical treatments of hermaphrodites is the desire to keep people straight'.[64] This observation attests to the power held by doctors to decide and perpetuate their version of gender norms. Malatino recognises the 'authoritative judgement' that medical professionals hold, but intersex accounts demonstrate how this authority can often be problematic.[65] Doctors perpetuate 'conservative typologies of maleness and femaleness' by adhering both to gender essentialism in the fact that women must have a functioning vagina, and adhering to heterosexuality in the assumption that they will be in a sexual relationship with a man in the future.[66]

The medical perpetuation of heterosexuality in intersex testimonies is refigured by Eugenides in *Middlesex* as internalised by the protagonist. Cal's understanding of heterosexual norms feeds into latent homophobia and homosexual shame. Before Cal has revised his gender identity, he recognises that there is 'something improper' about his homosexual attraction to other girls.[67] Cal's shame intensifies in his affair with his female best friend, referred to as the Obscure Object: 'So that was our love affair. Wordless, blinkered, a nighttime thing, a dream thing'.[68] Homophobia manifests itself in the very way this relationship functions; Eugenides's refusal to name the girl who Cal is attracted to allegorises shame and latent homophobia through the suggested reluctance to admit the homosexual attraction. This 'obscurity' pervades their relationship as it is confined to the hours of darkness, and its 'wordless' nature refuses verbalisation. Cal's internalised homophobia becomes explicit in his interview with Dr Luce, when the doctor is trying to understand Cal's gender identity. Cal answers Dr Luce's questions with heteronormative answers, as when asked about his attraction to the Object he 'insisted, a little too loudly' that they are 'just friends'.[69] This interaction is significant when compared to intersex testimonies. In the testimonies, the doctors talk about 'normal sex', whereas in *Middlesex* it is Cal's own homophobic concern that perpetuates the idea of 'normal sex'.[70] Eugenides thus presents a problematic internalisation of 'the normative, the right, the conventional' in his depiction of Cal's attitudes towards his sexuality.

The conflation of gender and sexuality in *Middlesex* is made explicit in the cabin in the woods where Cal, the Obscure Object and Rex Reese enter into a quasi-love triangle. In this scene, Cal imagines himself entering Rex Reese's male body to have heterosexual sex with the Object. The emotions generated by this mystical scene confirm Cal's gender

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[63] Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 54.
[64] Alice Dreger, in Rachel Carroll, 'Retrospective Sex: Rewriting Intersexuality in Jeffrey Eugenides's Middlesex', *Journal of American Studies*, 44.1 (2010), 187-201, p. 188.
[65] Malatino, *Queer Embodiment*, p. 23.
[66] Ibid*.*, p. 19.
[67] Eugenides, *Middlesex*, p. 265.
[68] Ibid., p. 385.
[69] Ibid., p. 417.
[70] Lahood, *Intersexion.*

concerns: 'for the first time I clearly understood that I wasn't a girl but something in between. I know this from how natural it had felt to enter Rex Reese's body, *how right it felt*'.[71] Does this imagined heterosexual act feel right because of the pervasive homophobia which has unknowingly informed Cal's view of relationships and gender? Societal sexual norms have become so embedded in ideas of gender and sexuality that Cal cannot help but view his own desires through the lens of 'the normative, the right, the conventional'; his mention of how 'natural' this felt is synonymous with feeling 'normal'. Halberstam observes a problematic desire in society to 'leave heterosexuality intact as a kind of natural framework', demonstrating how heterosexual norms forms a 'scaffolding' which alternative sexualities are viewed against.[72] This theory explicitly resonates in Eugenides's quasi-love triangle. Halberstam's suggestion of a 'natural framework' takes the form of Rex Reese's and the Object's bodies, which Cal's homosexual desires enter into. Faced with two heterosexual possibilities, Cal associates with Rex Reese because of his attraction to the Object, concluding gender difference rather than homosexuality.

Cal's lesbian identity becomes a 'position of the strange' from which he needs to save himself.[73] Summarising the difficulties of Cal's intersex experience, Rachel Carroll concludes that 'the onset of puberty is effectively a prelude to a lifetime of gendered scrutiny'.[74] However, this observation is incorrect in the sense that this 'gendered scrutiny' is confined more to the time before Cal's diagnosis; the conflation of gender and sexuality means that this scrutiny lies in his homosexual desire for women, not just his non-normative body. He takes steps to conform to masculine gendered stereotypes, through his clothing choices, haircut and body language, once he has gained the knowledge of his intersex condition – justifying and maintaining his attraction to women. Halberstam attaches a different significance to puberty in their discussion of 'normal' gender binaries: 'by the time we reach puberty, our desires, our drives, our particular turn-ons and turn-offs have been established in our psyches in ways that are hard to change and may, in many cases, simply be permanent'.[75] This sheds light on the relief which Cal feels with his diagnosis, as his 'psyche' has been established in a way which was not socially normative for a biological female. Homophobic societal pressure has dictated that his same-sex attraction to women was unacceptable; it is seen as a 'detour, a digression, a prelude' in the novel, rather than something which he fully accepts.[76] It is a 'detour' to his subsequent identity as a man. His relief at being able to live as an 'acceptable' male is linked to the facilitation of his now heteronormative sexual attraction to women. Shostak notes the '"conservative agenda" underlying Cal's choice to assume a male gender identity and to enjoy the social access – including heterosexual access to women – that it entails'.[77] Cal's 'relief' at his 'heterosexual access to women' demonstrates the internalised homophobia regarding his same-sex attraction. By using

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[71] Eugenides, *Middlesex*, p. 375.

[72] Halberstam, *Gaga Feminism*, p. 65.

[73] Shostak, 'Theory Uncompromised by Practicality', p. 391.

[74] Carroll, 'Retrospective Sex', p. 194.

[75] Halberstam, *Gaga Feminism,* p. 85.

[76] Carroll, 'Retrospective Sex', p. 197.

[77] Shostak, 'Theory Uncompromised by Practicality', p. 487.

this to justify Cal's gender change, Eugenides precludes homosexual identities to uphold the heterosexual hegemony.

Cal's gender choices and the non-fiction testimonies of intersex people make evident the heteronormative arc to medical treatment, and how this is enforced by latent homophobia. Carroll observes that 'Eugenides's narrative remains implicated in heteronormative assumptions', as Cal's heterosexual relationship with Julie reinforces this heteronormativity at the novel's conclusion. *Middlesex* falls short of breaking free from gender binaries and societal sexual norms, but evidently so do non-fiction testimonies – not through the intersex narrators propagating normative views, but due to the normative society in which they live and the medical insistence on 'normal sex'. Thus, Eugenides's reliance on binaries and norms in his depiction of his intersex protagonist opens up a discussion on the hegemonic constraints of intersex treatment. Eugenides, whether deliberately or not, demonstrates that there is more work to be done in dismantling the heterosexual hegemony. Morgan Holmes writes that 'parents and surgeons are not entitled to attempt to dictate what sexual normalcy is'. [78] Until societal perpetuations of gender and sexuality norms have been dismantled, however, subconscious understandings of these norms will ultimately dictate the intersex person's own view of themselves, too.

Conclusion

Persecution and marginalisation of the LGBTQI+ community is ongoing, as the healthcare discrimination that has emerged out of the recent COVID-19 pandemic proves. In Hungary, a decision has been made to implement a new law which prevents trans and intersex people from having their gender legally recognised.[79] This move silences, denies, and erases the intersex community whilst perpetuating the idea of the gender binary as the norm, and any other identity as 'other'. Decisions such as these make clear the vital role that literature and documentaries play in gaining recognition for intersex people.

The correlation between Eugenides's *Middlesex* and non-fiction intersex testimonies is significant in conveying the damaging influence of gender and sexuality norms. Societal intolerance of the non-normative translates into persecutory language, and external reactions perpetuate intersex people's negative self-definition. The knowledge gained with medical diagnosis can present a psychological shift, through changes to the language circumscribing the condition in both fiction and non-fiction. The recent acceptance of non-binary pronouns within the Anglo-American context presents intersex people with a new way of defining themselves which is divorced from both pathological and persecutory language. We can look towards the evolution of both intersex literature, and identity, in response to these linguistic changes.

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[78] Morgan Holmes, 'Is Growing Up in Silence Better Than Growing Up Different?', p. 9.

[79] Oisin Kenny, 'UN Issues warning to countries who use COVID-19 emergency powers to attach LGBT+ community', *Gay Ireland News*, 23 April 2020 <https://gcn.ie/un-condemns-countries-use-covid-19-attack-lgbt-community/> [accessed 4 May 2020].

The heterosexual arc to medical treatment presents a perpetuation of norms not solely confined to language. Medical insistence on 'normal sex' is reflected in Cal's internalised homophobia. Eugenides's presentation of his protagonist demonstrates the damaging internalisation of sexual and gender norms, and how the intersex person can unknowingly perpetuate the hegemonic ideals which have been pitted against them from the outset. Eugenides's reliance on the gender binary and his perpetuation of homophobic attitudes in his presentation of Cal can be seen as ways that *Middlesex* falls short. At the same time this reflects the ways in which society falls short, as Eugenides writes within and for a society which is pervaded by these inescapable skewed ideals. The only way that we can accept the intersex identity, and dismantle the hegemonies which work against it, is by first being aware that it exists. Eugenides effectively casts a light on the intersex experience in the realm of popular fiction, and this cannot be overlooked.

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Into the Weird

Daniel Jeffreys

Before lockdown, I moved from London to Brightlingsea on the east coast in response to a midlife crisis. A more or less normal process as you assess your life aged fifty and are possessed, temporarily, with a feeling of deathly, creeping irrelevance − as a meaning machine you begin to break down. I began receiving emails from a dead friend, just an algorithm gone awry, but the messages contained photos of work colleagues, suggesting agency rather than a random worm munching its way through my mate's address book. This was digital witchcraft and it disturbed me. Quotidian concerns about the integrity of my email server gave way to an encounter with the numinous, the very same quality that had drawn me to weird fiction. I had a sense of 'the interestingness of things − the absorbingness, the picturesqueness […] of things which happen in the most casual and everyday way! As if they were nothing you know!'[1]

The weird has always influenced my writing practice, which explores issues of agency and consists of daily walks in locations that are the sites of historic trauma where accidents, suffering and deaths have occurred: walking the sites of the North Sea flood surges of 1953; The Cage in St. Osyth where local witch, Ursula Kempe (1525-1582) was held until her trial; the footpath where the women accused of witchcraft hurried between Mistley and Manningtree. I ask myself, does anything still resonate in the countryside and community connected to traumatic events? Perhaps, the location most incongruous of all is the village green, South Street, Manningtree, where four local women were hung in 1645 for the crime of witchcraft. Looking down to *The Red Lion* among the Georgian houses, it is hard to imagine how a well-groomed market town like Manningtree could collude in such horror. It gave me butterflies that warm May afternoon. I looked at the poster with the Covid app on the nearby Methodist church advertising a 'text your prayer service.' 'We can pray for you,' it said. Was this an unconscious sop to the ghosts of the dead women: Anne West, Helen Clark, Anne Cooper, Marian Hocket? I say their names as an incantation, a reverse spell to bring them back into daylight.

The weird was calling from the woodland in between Mistley and Manningtree. It is no surprise that wood is connected to the weird, since it blurs the line between organic and inorganic, an interstitial thing that possesses uncanny properties. We lovingly oil and feed our parquet floors, massage our wooden instruments and rejoice in the beauty of the grain, the flame maple on the neck of an acoustic guitar, the rosewood fretboard − even when 'dead' we treat wooden instruments with the respect we might accord the living. After all that polishing and shaping, is it any surprise that folktales celebrate the quickening of matter into life? The Czech fable *Otesansek*[2]*,* like *Pinocchio,* is about a lump of wood brought to life by a childless couple. The wooden child eats both parents and is

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[1] Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Christmas in the Fog: Queens of the Abyss, Lost Stories from the Women of the Weird,* (London: British Library, 2020), p. 88.

[2] Karel Jaromir Erben, translated by John Theophilus Nanké, *Slavonic Fairy Tales: The long-desired child,* (1874).

defined by its insatiable hunger. Both wooden baby and boy puppet, cut off from their traditional sources of nourishment (sunlight and water), crave food. Woodenness is represented as a hungry hollow, trees transforming into rootless children who quickly become insatiable. Pinocchio's search for a soul, an *animus,* develops the key aspect of the uncanny, the journey from inanimate to animate. By the same token, the reverse journey can be made. Especially relevant to my experience of the mid-life crisis when depression disconnected me from the things I valued. I was wooden in my responses, lacking sap and vitality. My wife accused me of being 'thick as two short planks,' unthinking, catatonic about our future. Hence our fear of the mannequin and ventriloquist's dummy.

Wood is also the source of Nordic creation myths. The first humans, Ask and Embla, were created from polished driftwood, discovered by beachcombing gods, limb-like branches that you might mistake for body parts washed up on the shore. In addition, wood has other qualities. In regard to the Manningtree witches, the wood was both protector and persecutor. Wood (particularly the forest on Furze Hill) provided a sanctuary for hunted women while also forming the raw materials for the gibbet. Wood not only possesses weird properties but the very origins of the word weird relates to the handmaiden of a tree.

The word weird is derived from the old Saxon word for fate[3] (wyrd) and is linked in Norse mythology to the handmaidens who tend the sacred ash tree, Yggdrasill, that thrusts its branches through the universe. One of the Norns from Nordic mythology, Uror, who tends the tree, is also responsible for human husbandry. Alongside two fellow giantesses, she presides over each birth, carving the individual's destiny on the bark, scarifying the tissue with long yellow fingernails – much as graffiti artists or lovers tag themselves in a tree's outer skin. Throughout our lifetime (so the story goes) secret communications are whispered by the maidens who tend the supernatural tree, whispers that are part of the woodland susurrus. Traditionally, the woods are a place to get lost and found, where we undergo some trial of reflection and renewal. It is no accident that the antecedents of the weird are symbolized in a sacred, secret-bearing tree.

The weird has always been linked with this hidden and mysterious process of becoming: the future that Uror has inscribed in the ash. Uror can trace the trajectory of our lives with her fingernail, following the raised ridges on the bark, what we can only glimpse in dreams and whispers. The weird creates a tension between the possibilities of becoming and our knowledge that the scratches on the bark are already ingrained. The weird exists in this tiny zone of apparent free will. We act as if we have agency and can ignore our individual 'weirds' already carved on the tree. While we live our lives, the maidens operate like clandestine tree surgeons, lopping a life off here, pollarding a future there, and while this secretive surgery continues, there are glimpses in our waking lives of other realities: dreams and encounters with the bizarre that overflow the normal channels of experience. The weird is about hints and glints of experience. Unlike other genres, it avoids the

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[3] For a discussion on how the word weird is derived from the German, die gewordene (the 'Has Become'), please see J. Machin, *Weird Fiction in Britain 1880-1939,* (Switzerland: Palgrave Gothic, 2018), p. 32.

limitations of explanation. Instead, the writers of weird tales, attempt to reinitiate the reader into the dark mystery of existence. In the following field research into the weird it seemed fitting to return to the weird's roots in Nordic mythology, go back into the woods and examine my responses to an ancient tree, not quite as old as Yggdrasil.

Old Knobbley is an 800-year-old oak associated with the Manningtree witches. One of the growing rank of celebrity trees dreaming green thoughts in a green shade that now has its own Facebook page and armies of picknickers. Old Knobbley has even been modelled and re-assembled from cardboard in Colchester's *Firstsite* art gallery[4] with recorded transcripts of seventeenth century confessions from women accused of witchcraft, their testimonials whispered from hanging speakers. The whispers affected me and I decided to follow them to the source, to the tree where they sought shelter — the wide boughs and trunk with its numerous footholds, smoothed over the years by hundreds of scrabbling feet. The woods today are still a place of re-enchantment and the tree a site of pilgrimage. On my many walks there, I have met a descendant of a woman hung for witchcraft in Salem, Essex county, in 1692, as well as a spiritualist holding a moonlit séance around the tree. The woods retain this quality of eerie tangled, stillness; especially when you look down on moonlit nights towards the glitter of Gamekeeper's Pond and wonder at the duckings and drownings that took place under Matthew Hopkins' supervision.

The first few visits I could not find Old Knobbley in the wild wood at the top of Furze Hill. As the country headed towards lockdown, people grew guarded. I was an outsider in a close-knit community where curtains are drawn early and lamps are lit. Even today there is a sense of increased watchfulness, of people knowing your business. The persecution of the Manningtree witches was not the work of one unpleasant zealot but a community wide effort to report on unlucky individuals. Later, during lockdown, I became more aware of the watchful community: a non-essential visit to a late-night garage could result in public shaming on a local Facebook group. It doesn't take much for whispers to start.

Today, I hope to find the tree quickly, but I wonder whether I'm worthy after two pints of Golden Ale in *The Mistley Thorn* once owned by Matthew Hopkins, self-appointed Witchfinder General and serial murderer of Essex women. A man of contradictions: puritan and publican. Bar staff tell me that his poltergeist smashes pint glasses, perhaps this is his way of reconciling his profession with his principles. It is strange how the image of him on the frontispiece of the original 1647 edition of *The Discovery of Witches* has him aping in many ways the appearance of a conjurer, the tall-banded hat and cape, the staff he holds in his right hand like the handle of a broom. His wide-eyed leonine face mirrors the astonishment of the large eyed, inquisitive familiars that watch us from the foreground while his strange, finely twizzled moustache quivers like an extra sensory apparatus for sniffing out evil.

The treatise is a depressing read, questions and answers posed in a cod legalese language reflecting his early training as a lawyer and his attempts to elevate acts of sadism into a legitimate science. Here are early forms of torture: sleep deprivation and waterboarding,

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[4] Susan Pui San Lok, *A COVEN A GROVE A STAND*, Firstsite, 2019.

which have yet to be improved upon, taken up rather too enthusiastically in our latter-day War on Terror – a risible attempt to rebrand torture as a 'humane' form of interrogation. The pamphlet contradicts itself. Women are to be walked so they cry out to their familiars in exhaustion and prove their guilt, but later, we are told that if they lay down from lack of energy 'immediately comes their Familirs into the room and scareth the watchers.'[5] This is to be discouraged.

Hopkins, although a keen scaremonger, seeks to reassure the reader of the limited power of the devil and his disciples and by extension of Hopkins own omnipotence. He exonerates the witch from doing *actual* harm – their real crime is being duped by the devil. The devil, Hopkins tells us, has 6000 years of experience in art and physic. He only knows if a man is liable to a certain disease. In other words, he diagnoses terminal conditions and then makes the witches believe that they are responsible for these imminent deaths. Only once does his mask slip when he addresses the witches as if he were Satan tempting his children, referring to them as 'delicate firebrand-darlings.'[6] You can feel his tongue flickering over their bodies, a rare sensual outburst from this young puritan.

I wait for the room to communicate with me, touching the old wainscoting hoping for a volt from the past, an engraved initial but it's all repainted in grey and there is little sign of the past here: German bar staff, jars of homemade vodka – one made from bacon – and a group of elderly women wearing transparent capes – ghosts of a different sort, pecking at the rich fish stew. Maybe it's the ale but I feel myself dispersing. I can't seem to maintain focus and feel as hollow as an old tree trunk, echoey with other voices.

Mistley feels well-to-do, smart, slightly artificial, as if you wandered on to a stage set on the banks of the Stour with its armies of swans arrowing through the water, today still as glycerine. There is that note of unreality. One I'm hearing more and more, quickening in response to the writing process as I see how the past – the wainscoting and the witch trials – keeps erupting in the present. This is where Hopkins walked, this is the hopping bridge, another body of water that his ghost is rumoured to frequent on full moons.

Mistley was once a speculator's dream designed to rival Bath as a centre for fashion with a church, saltwater spa and assembly room. Now instead there is a gap between the towers, the two neoclassical pavilions topped with cupolas that bookended the church. The scheme failed; the church fell into disrepair. All that remains are the ornamental bookends framing emptiness, the moral centre vanished, supplanted by buddleia, horse chestnut and cloud. Nearby instead of a saltwater spa is a condemned animal sanctuary – the braying of celibate donkeys filling me with dread.

The road climbs uphill, past grey stone villas and what once must have been the road to Old Mistley Hall, now kennels. It feels like trespassing as you continue past empty fields

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[5] Matthew Hopkins *The Discovery of Witches: in Answer to Several QUERIES LATELY Delivered to the Judges of Assize for the County of Norfolk and Now Published by MATTHEW HOPKINS, Witch-finder FOR the Benefit of the Whole KINGDOM (Norwich: H.W. Hunt, 1647)* Quer. 9.
<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/14015/14015-h/14015-h.htm> [Accessed 20/7/21].
[6] Matthew Hopkins, *The Discovery of Witches,* Quest 13.

with churned up lanes of earth and turn into a paved road under an avenue of small trees. The avenue leads to an entirely new prospect; ahead is a little valley of bright green fields leading down and then climbing to the crown of trees on top of Furze Hill. A man in waterproofs stands under a tree looking up into the canopy. He is 'landscaping' and when I mention my destination, he looks at his watch: 'only an hour of daylight left… you don't want to get stuck on that hill.' That's exactly what I do want, to get lost and found, to find something in the wood that will enhance reality.

I am looking for the numinous, 'that indescribable quality of translucent reality' is how the narrator, Wallace, describes his experience in the enchanted garden in H.G. Wells *The Door in The Wall*[7]. The wind is getting up, stirring armfuls of tiny yellow leaves, dancing in circles. A flock of long-tailed tits fly among the upper branches, their curious flattened faces like flying mice. I imagine the women persecuted by Hopkins, running through these fields to the straggling woodland, wading through the pond that oozes along the outskirts of the wood. The greenness is startling on the downhill, an unreal emerald green similar to the fields that grow luxury lawn turf, the technicolour ramped up to dazzling brightness. I stop to take in the number of massive tree carcases scattered in these meadows. These are ghosts of Neolithic beasts: cave bear and giant elk lying on their backs in the wet grass with their shiny legs trampling the air, great crowns of antlers are entangled with mud and ivy.

One more intimation of the eerie intrudes on your notice as you approach the wood: an outlying Lodge, all that remains of the Manor House long since demolished. It has a thin, one-dimensional aspect. A whitewashed wall with white door and marble columns, a ceremonial doorway between worlds. The door functions as a prop from the weird tale. Fisher claims that the weird tale deals with threshold states. We are in a state of betweenness as long as we hover on the threshold. On either side lie the rigorous constraints of fantasy and realism. 'Fantasy naturalises other worlds. But the weird de-naturalises all worlds, by exposing their instability, their openness to the outside.'[8] The weird needs a route in to the everyday. It might be a fireplace where oil paintings of ancient rites drop down at irregular intervals, or a windowpane fashioned from otherworldly blue glass that at night proposes other views of squirming, tentacular forms rather than the lampposts of a quiet suburban street. Mirrors, however small, may be portals from which the terrifying sons of the bird crawl through in Robert Heinlein's *The Unpleasant Profession of Jonathan Hoag.*

I am tempted to knock, call up the spirit of the old lodgekeeper. I bang on the door, no response only an intensification of the silence. There is the sense I have started something, the hollow knock louder than I anticipated. It will trouble me later when I lie in bed listening to the wind through the chimney and the banging of the cat flap (we have no cat). The lodgekeeper doesn't come so I peer around the corner. There is no inside, just a plain brick wall – the Lodge functions as a perspective façade. The owner of the vanished Manor would have looked from his study down the deep planted avenue, waving

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[7] H.G. Wells, *The Country of the Blind and Other Selected Stories,* (London: Penguin Classics 2007), p. 372.
[8] Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie,* (London: Repeater Books), p. 29.

with mature trees, at this seemingly stable three-dimensional structure, admired the Ionic columns from the top of his staircase, relished in the solidity of the illusion and his clever penny-pinching strategy, projecting influence on a limited budget. Nowadays, we are only left with the struts holding reality in place. It is thinner stuff than we imagine. The dream of prestige, classical symmetry torn apart by the great ransacking wind bowling emptiness before it. Similarly, Mistley Towers commemorates the grey skies and wildlife and 'the failure of presence: there is nothing present where there should be something'.[9]

The door has a handle and I look around before breaking and entering. The real does not feel real. A creak and dull thunk as the spindle turns. I pause, the watcher on the threshold, prolonging the moment of betweenness. The door opens. Furze Hill is enhanced in its whitewashed frame of rotten wood. I know how this story goes. I have inserted myself into the frame, turned into an interloper and by crossing the threshold have violated the laws of The Old Ones and awakened Cthulu himself. I will be punished. So much better than being ignored.

I pass through the doorway into woodland and a steep, leafy hill. It is here I can most easily transport myself to the seventeenth century among the huge hollow carcases of trees and can inhabit the physical space of those persecuted women who walked the connecting pathway between Mistley and Manningtree on their daily errands. Women and widows from the civil war still raging, dispossessed of everything, burrowing down into their secret selves and trading in an economy of secrets: wisdom, gossip, tittle-tattle, folk remedies – anything to keep body and soul together. Secrets confer power and prestige on the powerless; whispers of scandal kept tongues nimble and minds ticking over during harsh winter months. It was those half-truths and brags that would be worked up, later, as evidence.

I approach the crazy tilting pasture and the huge trees, hornbeams and horse chestnut, growing sideways, putting down extra limbs in the goose grass, stumps under half-shade that look like witches' familiars. Gamekeeper's Pond forms a moat around the bottom of Furze hill; the path and shallows are bedraggled with willows. This is where the witches were once 'swum.' A dog walker informs me that Matthew Hopkins materialises in the dusk, sitting on a bough extending over the water. I imagine a beatnik puppeteer in polo neck and black leggings, a finely twizzled moustache vibrating like a tuning fork. This is a liminal place, home to two apparitions, that I have yet to see despite varying the times of my visit. In addition to Hopkins, an agitated white lady is rumoured to be seen ducking in and out of the twiggy alcoves, wringing her hands, her gown trailing in the water.

From this vantage point trees straggling up the slope form a natural nave, branches knitted overhead in the delicate tracery of Gothic windows. Right at the top is the altar piece: the massive 800-year-old charred trunk of Old Knobbley. Yes, I am worthy, the tree has been revealed in its most impressive vista. Broken amputee limbs jab at the sky. The tree resembles some giant half-exploded crustacean. I climb the hill and listen to the rustling of trees: beeches and silver birch, leaves flipping silver in the wind. Strange effect

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[9] Mark Fisher, p. 61.

in the woods, along the lower slopes there is this still frozen mist, finely textured cobwebs suspended in the air – my eyesight is bad, and I can't tell whether this is some faint grey foliage. Under foot is witchy stuff: brown ectoplasmic fungus, shaped into orifices and tiny ears.

The trunk bubbles and creases into folds and chancres, a charred hollowed jacket where children light fires. A pistachio green lichen stains the lower branches. I pull myself up and an angry red hornet buzzes out of the hollow. I remember the terrifying fanged and vaginal spider in M.R. James's *The Ash Tree*, the spirt of an executed witch who cursed the descendants of the family who put her to death, nestling in the tree's hollow with her bloodsucking children. But here there is stillness, no furry fanged maleficia. The tree is solid and comforting – the woodland wild and unhusbanded, neglected by Tendring council. I listen to the sighs of the tree, the wind whispering through the branches and feel timeless, anxiety free. Did the Manningtree witches take shelter here? Their familiars rather than venomous spiders were white kittens and polecats. Innocent creatures with soft, furry bodies: Pyewacket, Vinegar Tom, Holt, Jarmara, Sacke and Sugar, all apparently witnessed by Matthew Hopkins during the interrogation of Elizabeth Clarke over multiple nights of sleep deprivation. I sit back in the branches, now for a moment part of the canopy and its susurrus.

I realise that I am the source of this strangeness. Normal woodland conventions have been abandoned: I don't own a dog and it is unusual to encounter a grown man sitting alone in a tree unless dressed in green leggings. I am providing the element of wrongness in the landscape. One of Fisher's definitions of the weird is that the weird focuses on travel between worlds. The creature seeks a conduit. The weird tales of Lovecraft detail how these creatures travel through incantation, interstellar flight on crumpled black wings, exhumation, the opening of a long disused doorway, the cleaning of a stained-glass window that now casts a coloured heraldic symbol on a library wall when the sun strikes the glass. I am that conduit. I understand these empty immensities all reside within; it is through me that the ghosts of these persecuted women enter this world. We contain the numinous, unknowable hidden qualities that can, intermittently, surprise us.

I stay in the tree for a while longer, comfortably wedged in the uppermost branches, seeing diggers in a distant field, zoning out of the woodland sounds and my own anxieties about childcare (shouldn't I be picking my daughter up from ballet?) Consciousness is reducing to a manageable hum, a low psychic reverberation from a tiny gong. Yes, I will move to Death-on-Sea and meditate myself into a pinprick of light. Already, I am practising the art of mindlessness, slipping beneath the surface agitation into great still pools of glycerine – there is nothing here just the heat of my blood, the tree whisper and the hillside turning dark. I cannot decipher the writing on the bark. Surely, there is nothing to be afraid of.

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Witches and their Queer Representation of Gender in Terry Pratchett's *Equal Rites* and *Weird Sisters*

Abigail Walker

The witch as female in both history and literature has received a lot of critical attention. Although certain critics have focused on the male witch, such as Lara Apps and Andrew Gow in their work *Male Witches in Early Modern Europe* (2003), witch historians tend to focus on the witch as female. For example, Silvia Federici mentions 'the female 'conspiracy' that was the historical justification for the witch hunts that bloodied Europe from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century'.[1] Whereas Charlotte-Rose Millar, similarly, points out that 'in early modern England, approximately 90 per cent of accused witches were women'.[2] Federici and Millar argue, in the same way as many other witch historians, that the early modern witch trials demonstrate the majority of those accused of witchcraft were female. This can be noted in several well-known witch trials – such as the trials of the Pendle witches (1612) where, out of the twelve accused, ten were female – and the Salem witch trials (1692-1693) where fourteen out of the nineteen people executed were women. Although the accused were often women, this article will argue that those women didn't conform to conventional models of femininity and were therefore seen as threatening to heteropatriarchal order. Furthermore, influenced by the work of several queer theorists, the article will suggest that the witch troubles gender essentialism by challenging the identity of 'woman' with their classification as a lesbian Other. Christopher Penczak suggests that 'claiming words such as 'gay,' 'lesbian,' and 'queer' as something healthy is as important as reclaiming the word 'witch''.[3] This article will concur with the views of Penczak and will challenge the negative connotations that can be associated with words such as witch, monster, Other, and lesbian by suggesting a positive reclamation with how they demonstrate a challenge to heteronormative institutions. It will analyse fictitious witches in two of Terry Pratchett's novels, *Equal Rites* and *Wyrd Sisters*, and argue how the witches in these texts trouble sex and gender in various ways. These two books are part of Pratchett's vast 'Discworld' series which consists of forty-one novels, eleven of which focus primarily on his witch characters. This article prioritises depth over breadth and focuses purely on *Equal Rites* and *Wyrd Sisters,* although there is much more ground to cover in future research The limited work into Pratchett's representation of gender has predominately focused on how, when it comes to the field of magic, he sets out a clear binary between witches and wizards. However, although at face value it may appear that magic in Discworld is strictly binary, this article argues Pratchett's satirical fantasy setting allows the opportunity to question the stability of gender. A queer reading interprets that Pratchett doesn't demonstrate the difference of male and female magic to adhere to the gender binary, instead it reveals the fragility of this binary, and how it can be subverted. For example, *Equal Rites* begins with the assumption that wizard magic is

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[1] Silvia Federici, *Witches, Witch-Hunting, and Women* (Toronto: PM Press, 2018), p. 24.

[2] Charlotte-Rose Millar, *Witchcraft, the Devil, and Emotions in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 84.

[3] Christopher Penczak, *Gay Witchcraft: Empowering the Tribe* (Boston: Red Wheel, 2003), p. xvi.

wrong for a witch but later demonstrates a witch, Weatherwax, as subverting binary notions of gender by duelling and defeating the Arch-chancellor of Unseen University with wizard magic. This demonstrates a challenge to the division of gender by showing that the male/female binary is a social construct that can be dismantled.

Although Pratchett himself uses female pronouns when referring to his witches, as this article argues that witches can be analysed as lesbian Others it will refer to his witches with gender-neutral pronouns to signify their challenge to the male/female binary. However, before the article explores further literary analysis, it will discuss the work of its chosen theorists, beginning with Monique Wittig who, in her essay 'One is Not Born a Woman', suggests that:

> lesbian is the only concept I know of which is beyond the categories of sex (woman and man), because the designated subject (lesbian) is *not* a woman, either economically, or politically, or ideologically. For what makes a woman is a specific social relation to a man, a relation that we have previously called servitude [...] a relation which lesbians escape by refusing to become or to stay heterosexual.[4]

The article will be influenced by her theory that a lesbian cannot be a woman due to their absence of male relationships, however it will go beyond this by suggesting the concept of the witch is also beyond the categories of sex and how the witch can also, therefore, be classed as a lesbian due to their predominant avoidance of meaningful relationships with men. It will then discuss the work of the theorist Paulina Palmer, such as her suggestion that 'the introduction of an erotic female relationship has the effect of critiquing and destabilizing heterosexist values by problematizing a dualist approach to gender'.[5] Palmer states that lesbianism is a challenge to gender binarism as it disrupts the essentialism of heterosexuality by demonstrating the absence of men. This article will concur with the views of Palmer and Wittig by suggesting that, when the witch is seen as a lesbian, they become a queer icon who challenges conventional femininity, gender essentialism, and heteronormativity. The article will then focus on the witch and their aesthetic; it will discuss how the witch is often described as elderly, physically unappealing, and as presenting masculine physical traits, such as beards, and how this connects to themes of monstrosity and otherness.

In the preface to her work Wittig states that 'the opposition of men and women [...] has nothing eternal about it and that to overcome it one must destroy politically, philosophically, and symbolically the categories of 'men' and 'women''.[6] She insists the categories of 'men' and 'women' are social constructs that can and should be dismantled and elaborates upon this further in 'One is Not Born a Woman', suggesting that:

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[4] Monique Wittig, 'One is Not Born a Woman', in *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), pp. 9-20 (p. 20).

[5] Paulina Palmer, *Lesbian Gothic: Transgressive Fictions* (New York: Cassell, 1999), p. 6.

[6] Monique Wittig, 'Preface', in *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), pp. xiii-xvii (pp. xiii-xiv).

by admitting that there is a 'natural' division between women and men, we naturalize history, we assume that 'men' and 'women' have always existed and will always exist […] consequently we naturalise the social phenomena which express our oppression, making change impossible.[7]

Wittig argues that, by accepting the categories of 'men' and 'women', it allows the oppression of women, particularly homosexual women, as it adheres to patriarchy and suggests women must be heterosexual as they conform to the male/female binary. Furthermore, by accepting these categories and allowing their continuation, we naturalise them and allow the continued existence of heteropatriarchy. Wittig states that:

one feature of lesbian oppression consists precisely of making women out of reach for us, since women belong to men. Thus a lesbian *has to* be something else, a not-woman, a not-man, a product of society, not a product of nature, for there is no nature in society.[8]

The terms 'men' and 'women', therefore, can be seen as enforcing lesbian invisibility as, to be a woman, you must belong to a man. However, if we accept the term 'lesbian' as neither a woman or a man it combats lesbian invisibility and allows the lesbian to exist freely and challenge the dominance of heteropatriarchy and gender essentialism. Wittig's theory, however, has been described as radical and outdated by certain theorists. For example, Justyna Sempruch states that 'Wittig replaces the signified 'woman' with the category of 'lesbian' […] This radicalism leaves no room for more fluid and dynamic definitions of lesbianism'.[9] Sempruch suggests that Wittig's theory of the lesbian as a not-woman makes the term 'lesbian' become essentialist and fixed, not open like the work of theorists such as Adrienne Rich who focuses on lesbianism as a political statement. Similar to Sempruch, Teresa de Lauretis points out the controversy that surrounds Wittig's theory:

the phrase 'lesbian society' had everyone in an uproar. […] They said Wittig was a utopist, an essentialist, a dogmatic separatist, even a 'classic idealist.' […] You can speak of a lesbian society only in the liberal political perspective of free choice, according to which anyone is free to live as they like, and that, of course, is a capitalist myth.[10]

Although she points out the negative views of Wittig's work, she also suggests that Wittig's theories are often misunderstood and how they, unlike the belief of certain theorists, present a more open representation of lesbianism. For example, Lauretis challenges the critique of Wittig's theories, suggesting a lack of understanding of her view of lesbians as non-women by stating that:

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[7] Wittig, 'Not Born a Woman', pp. 10-11.

[8] Ibid., p. 13.

[9] Justyna Sempruch, *Fantasies of Gender and the Witch in Feminist Theory and Literature* (Indiana: Purdue University Press, p. 2008), p. 23.

[10] Teresa de Lauretis, 'When Lesbians were Not Women', in *Monique Wittig: Theoretical, Political, and Literary Essays*, ed. by Namascar Shaktini (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), pp. 51-62 (p. 54).

> critics did not understand that Wittig's 'lesbian society' did not refer to some collectivity of gay women but was the term for a conceptual and experiential space carved out of the social field, a space of contradictions in the here and now that need be affirmed and not resolved.[11]

Here Lauretis states that Wittig's interpretation of the lesbian is more than a sexual preference and doesn't challenge a women's culture. Instead, when gender binarism is dismantled, Wittig's lesbian promotes individualism as well as community. Wittig's 'lesbian society' doesn't focus on the grouping of gay women, but on the grouping of those who challenge heteropatriarchy by avoiding relations with men. With this in mind, this article challenges Sempruch's view of Wittig's theory of the lesbian as essentialist, instead it argues the opposite with the representation of the lesbian being open to not only those who have a romantic or sexual interest in other 'women', but to all those who avoid interactions with men. 'Woman' only exists through its relation to the category of 'man' so, without interaction with men, women would cease to exist. Influenced by the work of Wittig, this article argues that witches can be seen as lesbians. Federici points out that there's a 'common characterization of the witch as a poor old woman, living alone, […] bitterly resenting her marginalization'.[12] As suggested by Federici, witches are often depicted as elderly spinsters who avoid relationships or interactions with men and are then ostracised for subverting the heteronormative; this article will suggest that, due to this, they can be seen as lesbians with their disruption of the male/female binary and how they show a queer representation of gender. Although Wittig's work into lesbianism can be seen as outdated, as her essays were written forty years ago, the work of theorists such as Lauretis demonstrates the continuing relevance of Wittig's work and the importance of combating lesbian invisibility. In her essay Lauretis suggests 'the renewed attention to Wittig's work on the part of a new generation may perhaps reopen another virtual space of lesbian thought and writing'.[13] This article concurs with the views of Lauretis and suggests the importance of re-examining Wittig's theories and the space of lesbian thought and writing; it achieves this by examining the witch as a queer icon who transcends gender essentialism with their lesbian status, something which is unique when it comes to witch analysis.

Similar to Wittig, Palmer demonstrates her view that lesbianism is often invisible and therefore requires more focus with her suggestion that 'lesbian identity and relationships are social entities and require social recognition in order to survive. In a culture which refuses to credit their reality and allows them no space, they can scarcely be said to exist'.[14] This article concurs with the views of these writers and will argue for the importance of a focus into lesbian feminism and how the arguing of the witch as a queer icon demonstrates the importance of continued research into lesbianism. However, although Palmer demonstrates similarities to the work of Wittig, she also has a different

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[11] Ibid., p. 55.
[12] Federici, p. 25.
[13] Lauretis, 'Not Women', p. 57.
[14] Paulina Palmer, *Contemporary Women's Fiction: Narrative Practice and Feminist Theory*. (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), p. 148.

area of focus through her connection to the topics of gothic and monstrousness. For example, Palmer suggests that 'the homosexual and lesbian, as constructed in homophobic discourse, reveal connections with the monstrous'.[15] Here Palmer demonstrates the correlation between monstrosity and queer Others by suggesting queer subjects can often be seen as monstrous, particularly in homophobic discourse. Although at face value it may appear homophobic for this article to discuss the lesbian witch as monstrous, it will compare the two as a way to celebrate the alternatives to conventionality and normative depictions of gender and sexuality. The monstrous lesbian, therefore, is not seen as a negative, but is seen in this way due to their challenge to the heteronormative by presenting a more nuanced depiction of gender. Patricia White, in her comparison of lesbianism and monstrosity, explains how her own comparison of the two avoids negative connotations surrounding these images:

> though the alliance of horror with lesbianism may leave one uneasy, it should be pointed out that the horror genre has been claimed by film criticism as a 'progressive' one on several grounds. Concerned with the problem of the normal, it activates the abnormal in the 'threat' or the figure of the monster.[16]

Here White demonstrates how, instead of being seen as homophobic, the connection of the lesbian to the monstrous can be seen as progressive. This article concurs with the views of White and will suggest that analysing the witch as a monstrous lesbian Other presents the witch as a queer icon, one whose identity as monster and lesbian is nuanced and allows a challenge to gender binarism and conventional society. Furthermore, when the witch is seen as a monster, their gender can be seen as further queered due to the monster's connection to the posthuman. Patricia MacCormack argues that 'monstrosity points out the human as the icon of what is normal, and thus the monster as what is not human. For this reason, the monster has an ideal and intimate relationship with the concept of the posthuman'.[17] With this in mind, the lesbian and the witch will be argued as posthuman due to the way they subvert the identity of the normal human and are often argued as monstrous Others. Rosi Braidotti sees:

> the posthuman predicament as an opportunity to empower the pursuit of alternative schemes of thought, knowledge, and self-representation. The posthuman condition urges us to think critically and creatively about who and what we are actually in the process of becoming.[18]

Braidotti's view of the posthuman subject as allowing the opportunity of alternativity will enlighten this article's discussion of the witch as demonstrating a queer depiction of gender due to their connection to lesbianism, monstrousness, and posthumanism.

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[15] Paulina Palmer, *The Queer Uncanny: New Perspectives on the Gothic* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), p. 153.

[16] Patricia White, 'Female Spectator, Lesbian Specter: *The Haunting*', in *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. by Diane Fuss (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 142-172 (p. 144).

[17] Patricia MacCormack, 'Posthuman Teratology', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*, ed. by Asa Simon Mittman and Peter J. Dendle (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 293-309 (p. 293).

[18] Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), p. 12.

Palmer, with her focus on the lesbian monster, discusses similarities between monstrosity and lesbianism and suggests that both are connected to the theme of the unspeakable and secrecy.

> Another motif frequently found in Gothic texts which […] carries connotations of the abject and is pertinent to lesbian existence, is 'the unspeakable' and the themes of secrecy and silence relating to it. Something can be unspeakable because the individual lacks knowledge of it, because the knowledge is repressed, or because, though having access to it, s/he dare not admit the fact.[19]

The theme of the unspeakable connects to the lesbian and the monster, as both often need to remain hidden for protective purposes. This article examines the depiction of witches in its chosen literary resources and argues how they demonstrate the witch, like the lesbian, as a challenge to conventional society and therefore can attempt to remain hidden in order to avoid persecution, or, if revealed, need to be silenced.

The above discussion on the article's chosen queer theorists has already pointed out various parallels between the witch and the lesbian, such as how both challenge gender dualism and heterosexuality by avoiding relations with men, and how both are connected to the theme of monstrosity. As suggested in Palmer's discussion of the unspeakable, both the witch and the lesbian challenge gender dualism and heteronormativity which can often cause them to become subjects of fear and they can, subsequently, be ostracised or choose ostracisation due to this. Palmer argues that:

> lesbian involvements […] are depicted as amoral and transgressive. Ostracized by mainstream society, lesbians are portrayed as existing in an isolated, private space devoted to the pursuit of personal pleasure and cut off from the public world of social relations and politics.[20]

This shows a comparison between the witch and the lesbian. Palmer's suggestion that the lesbian is portrayed as isolated and cut off from normative society can be noted in various depictions of the witch, historically and fictitiously. Often the witch is presented as isolated, and this isolation was either a choice made by the witch or would cause the initial accusation. Carol F. Karlsen argues that 'the poor account for only a minority of the women accused' and women from all financial backgrounds were vulnerable to accusations.[21] However, although any woman was at risk of being accused of witchcraft during the witch craze, the persecution rate was higher for those who were alone or struggled financially. Karlsen suggests that 'unless they were single or widowed, accused women from wealthy families − families with estates valued at more than £500 − could be fairly confident that the accusations would be ignored by the authorities or deflected

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[19] Palmer, *Lesbian Gothic*, p. 120.
[20] Palmer, *Women's Fiction*, p. 132.
[21] Carol Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998), p. 79.

by their husbands'.[22] This shows that witch accusations against higher class women who adhered to heteronormative values were unlikely to be taken seriously, whereas women, no matter their class, could be persecuted as witches if they were alone and not connected to men. Fictitious witches are rarely demonstrated as involved in male relations and can often be seen as single such as the ironically named Granny Weatherwax in Pratchett's *Equal Rites* and *Wyrd Sisters*. In *Equal Rites* the young protagonist, Eskarina Smith, goes with their brothers to visit the witch's cottage and their analysis of the cottage demonstrates their views on Weatherwax's home and the witch's isolation: 'The cottage radiated emptiness. They could feel it. The windows *did* look like eyes, black and menacing against the snow' (emphasis original).[23] As the cottage radiates emptiness it demonstrates how Weatherwax is a witch who lives alone, furthermore the dark imagery presented by the description of the cottage, words such as 'black' and 'menacing', suggests how unnatural the children find it. Weatherwax, with their cold, empty cottage is viewed as strange to the children who seem to follow the social expectation that a 'woman' should live with a man. Kellie Burns suggests that 'lesbian 'lifestyles' are produced alongside discourses of fear, defining what most parents do not want their children to be *exposed to*, or *to become.* The lesbian monster is threatening, untrustworthy and disruptive to the steady order of things'.[24] Burns' theory that parents didn't want their children exposed to lesbians can be used to analyse this section of Pratchett's novel, with Weatherwax's way of life being seen as scary to the children who have been taught it's strange for a 'woman' to live without a man. Weatherwax, by choosing isolation, can be seen as a lesbian due to the way they avoid male relations and desires others to do the same. This can be noticed in *Wyrd Sisters* when Weatherwax reacts badly to Magrat Garlick's expressed interest in heterosexuality. Although throughout the novel Magrat expresses more interest in their coven and witch identity than romance with Verence, in a later novel they ultimately decide to marry Verence which causes them to disidentify as a witch. This article won't analyse this further, as it's beyond its two chosen novels, however this idea that Magrat stops identifying as a witch once they're married is important to mention as it highlights the queerness of the witch with the implication that a witch can't engage with men. Weatherwax's avoidance of men queers the witch by dismantling the male/female binary and diminishing the importance of men, something which confuses Eskarina and their siblings who have been taught how this challenges social expectations. In *Equal Rites* Weatherwax themselves even suggests that witches queer gender and the identity of 'woman' in their dialogue 'I'm not a lady, I'm a witch'.[25] Weatherwax makes a similar comment in *Wyrd Sisters* during an argument with a member of their coven, Nanny Ogg. Ogg refers to Weatherwax as a 'good woman' which infuriates Weatherwax, causing them to reply 'Don't you dare talk to me in that tone of voice! I'm not anyone's good woman'.[26]

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[22] Ibid.

[23] Terry Pratchett, *Equal Rites* (London: Transworld Books, 1987), p. 32.

[24] Kellie Burns, 'Lesbian Mothers, Two-Headed Monsters and the Televisual Machine', in *Queer and Subjugated Knowledges: Generating Subversive Imaginaries*, ed. by Kerry Robinson and Cristyn Davies (Illinois: Bentham Science Publishers, 2012), pp. 56-81 (p. 66).

[25] Pratchett, *Equal Rites*, p. 224.

[26] Terry Pratchett, *Wyrd Sisters* (London: Transworld Books, 1989), p. 138.

In both of these examples Weatherwax's dialogue is telling of their views on witches: a witch is not a woman. Weatherwax's suggestion that a witch cannot be a woman has parallels to Wittig's argument that lesbians cannot be women as 'by its very existence, lesbian society destroys the artificial (social) fact constituting women as a 'natural group''.[27] Wittig's theory that lesbian society destroys the essentialism of the category 'woman', this article argues, shows connections to the witch and how, when referred to as lesbian, they cannot be a woman. The witch, therefore, troubles gender as they aren't classed as a woman, instead they're identified as a lesbian who dismantles the binary of male/female by interrogating the spaces between the two. If Weatherwax isn't a woman due to their witch title, then the witch can be seen as queer and beyond the categories of sex and gender with their otherness.

This brings the article to another parallel between the lesbian and the witch: the confessional. Diane Purkiss argues that 'thousands of women were executed as witches, and in some parts of Europe torture was used to extract a confession from them; certainly, their gender often had a great deal to do with it'.[28] Similar to Purkiss, Apps and Gow point out that 'witch-hunting was in essence woman-hunting'.[29] The early modern witch trials would involve the accused witch needing to confess to their witch status; they would either do so freely, showing pride in their witch identity, or, if they refused to admit to what they were, they would be tortured in order to gain their confession. This connects to Palmer's theme of the unspeakable and shows a similarity to the experience of lesbians who society dictates must either confess, or 'come out', as a lesbian, or risk others revealing their lesbianism for them. In *The Queer Uncanny* Palmer states that 'although lesbian and male gay sexuality is generally invisible, this, instead of necessarily protecting the queer individual, can exacerbate the hostility that their sexuality provokes if discovered'.[30] As said by Palmer, the lesbian is at risk of hostility should their sexuality be discovered, which is similar to the experience of the witch who, once revealed, risks resentment and even death due to being different to those who are conventional. This idea of discovery, secrecy, and confession surrounding the lesbian or queer Other will be connected to the witch and how they, like the queer Other, are often discovered, or 'outed'. These parallels can be noted in the works of Pratchett who demonstrated elements of either the confessional or being outed as a witch. For example, *Equal Rites* demonstrates the outing of a witch and how a male character is the one to 'out' them. The first mention to the reader of Weatherwax's witch status is by a wizard; the novel begins with the wizard, Drum Billet, travelling to find a man whose wife will soon be giving birth to the eighth son of an eighth son, meaning he will have the capability of becoming a wizard. Once the wizard arrives and witnesses the birth of the child, he attempts to offer his staff to the infant to hold in order to pass on his powers. However, unbeknownst to

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[27] Wittig, 'Not Born a Woman', p. 9.

[28] Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 7.

[29] Lara Apps and Andrew Gow, *Male Witches in Early Modern Europe*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 2.

[30] Palmer, *Queer Uncanny*, p. 153.

him, the infant is born female but, when Weatherwax attempts to point this out, they're ignored and dismissed due to their witch status.

> 'The child must hold it,' said Drum Billet. The smith nodded and fumbled in the blanket until he located a tiny pink hand. He guided it gently to the wood. It gripped it tightly.
> 'But –' said the midwife.
> 'It's all right, Granny, I know what I'm about. She's a witch, sir, don't mind her.[31]

Although throughout the novel Weatherwax will often discuss how they identify as a witch, the demonstration of another character mentioning this first is similar to the 'outing' the lesbian can receive. To Billet it was important to mention to the child's father that Weatherwax is a witch and his comment to 'not mind her' suggests his view that Weatherwax, as a witch, should be ignored and is of no importance, similar to the invisibility experienced by the lesbian. Mimi Marinucci suggests that 'public recognition and condemnation of lesbian identity represented a hostile reaction, or *backlash*, against actual or perceived threats to male authority and privilege'.[32] Marinucci's idea that the lesbian could receive a hostile reaction can be used to analyse Billet's behaviour towards Weatherwax; Weatherwax, as a lesbian, is dismissed by Billet as he sees the witch as a threat to his authority and privilege. In this way Billet can be analysed as symbolic of patriarchy, with the witch, Weatherwax, symbolising a threat to its dominance, a threat that needs to be silenced.

The confessional demand is demonstrated more overtly in Pratchett's *Wyrd Sisters*. The novel is intertextual and demonstrates various connections to the work of Shakespeare, predominately *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, with its focus on Duke Felmet murdering his cousin, King Verence I, in order to become king himself. As the novel progresses, the duke becomes fearful of witches, who he feels would be able to expose him, and begins a vendetta against them. The duke and his wife then capture Ogg and attempt to torture a confession out of them.

> 'Will you confess?'
> 'What to?' said Nanny.
> 'It's common knowledge. Treason. Malicious witchcraft. Harbouring the king's enemies. Theft of the crown—'
> […]
> 'If you *do* confess,' said the duchess, 'you will merely be burned at the stake'.[33]

Although Ogg presented no threat to the duke and his wife, the duke still implemented torture in an attempt to receive a forced confession. The duke sees Ogg as a danger to society, a threat that must be stopped. This demonstrates hostility that could be

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[31] Pratchett, *Equal Rites*, p. 17.
[32] Mimi Marinucci, *Feminism is Queer: The Intimate Connection between Queer and Feminist Theory* (London: Zed Books, 2010), p. 23.
[33] Pratchett, *Wyrd Sisters*, pp. 158-159.

presented towards the witch or lesbian; once Ogg has been outed they receive negative treatment due to the way they challenge heteropatriarchal order.

Although witches were often accused based on their gender or class, accusations also arose based on their aesthetic. The witch is rarely described as looking ordinary or average, their appearance is either that of breath-taking beauty, which is often the case in Greek depictions, or, as predominately demonstrated in horror and early modern examples, they're described as deformed or unattractive. Barbara Creed argues that the witch is 'invariably represented as an old, ugly crone' and this image of the crone or hag connects to one of the ways that the witch presents a challenge to traditional depictions of gender and femininity.[34] The witch, as an ugly crone, presents a challenge to patriarchal order as they're seen as unfeminine, unappealing, and of no benefit to a heteropatriarchal society. Creed's suggestion of witches as ugly old crones can be noted in the writing of Pratchett who uses words such as 'hag' and 'crone' negatively when referring to his own witches in *Wyrd Sisters*. For example, the duchess refers to Weatherwax in such a way when she says 'come on, hag. Bring on your toads and demons'.[35] Not only is Weatherwax referred to as a hag, which suggests they're old and ugly, but the duchess proposes that Weatherwax would have an affinity with toads and demons. The duchess' assumption that Weatherwax would have a connection to these, which are both symbolic of evilness, suggests Weatherwax can be seen as a monstrous Other who can summon horrific creatures. Furthermore, when the duke and duchess are attempting to figure out how to defeat the witches, the fool suggests that words such as 'crone' can fight witches as it can destroy their reputation.

> 'Words can fight even witches.'
> 'What words?' said the duchess, thoughtfully.
> The fool shrugged. 'Crone. Evil eye. Stupid old woman.'[36]

This demonstrates how words such as 'hag' and 'crone' have the ability of destroying any possible respect the three witches Weatherwax, Ogg, and Magrat could receive from others. Power comes from these words and a person referred to as either of these becomes an Other, one who is ridiculed and seen as unworthy of respect. Weatherwax notes the power of language such as this in the format of the duke's play; when gauging the reaction of the audience to the play's representation of witches as evil hags they become concerned over how quickly the audience appear to accept it. The play perpetuates cultural motifs, such as the witch as an evil hag, and gives them credence, demonstrating how powerful words can be and how they can affect social perception (similar to that of early modern performances). After the duke and duchess begin to tell others that Weatherwax and their coven are hags the witches are gradually seen differently, suggesting that once they're seen as hags, they become queer Others who are shunned by normative society. This can be noted in the novel when Tomjon and his

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[34] Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 2.

[35] Pratchett, *Wyrd Sisters*, p. 336.

[36] Ibid., pp. 98-99.

cohort, on their way to the castle, use the word 'crone' and demonstrate a lack of respect to the witches who have helped them to find their way: 'She could have given more explicit instructions,' said Hwel. 'Like ask at the next crone,' said Tomjon'.[37] Not only does Tomjon referring to Magrat as a crone demonstrate how well Magrat, who is young, has been able to portray themselves as much older, it also demonstrates how witches are often presented as ugly, older 'women' and how this lack of femininity comes with a lack of respect. Although Pratchett occasionally uses the word 'hag' as the vernacular term for 'witch' (notable in the language of the Nac Mac Feegle in the Tiffany Aching sub-series), in *Wyrd Sisters* this word has negative connotations as characters referred to in this way are treated badly by others. However, although the word 'hag' in *Wyrd Sisters* is meant as an insult the witches can be seen as queer icons due to the way they use the title to challenge conventional depictions of gender. The hag demonstrates a lack of femininity and is compared negatively to women which, this article argues, suggests that the witch subverts gender binarism by being seen as a non-woman. This can be further illustrated in the visual representation of the witches. For example, in Marc Burrows' biography of Pratchett, when discussing how elements of Pratchett's earlier writing resurfaces in Discworld, he states that 'the word 'Ogg' crops up as the surname of an ogre, long before it would later attach itself to Granny Weatherwax's irascible sidekick in the Discworld novels'.[38] According to Burrows, Pratchett wrote stories in the Children's Circle column in the *Bucks Free Press* between 1965-1970, during which the name Ogg was used for an ogre. It would appear more than a coincidence that the surname 'Ogg' was used for an ogre before it was used for a witch, as both share connections to something usually described as physically monstrous.

The use of the word 'hag' demonstrates how the witch subverted traditional femininity with their crone-like appearance, however they also queer gender by demonstrating masculine attributes. Pratchett's witches demonstrate masculinity in several ways, predominately through themes of tomboyism and masculine aesthetics. Judith Halberstam suggests that 'there is remarkably little written about masculinity in women, and this culture generally evinces considerable anxiety about even the prospect of manly women'.[39] This article concurs with the views of Halberstam and suggests that masculinity in women is usually ignored or, if it's discussed, is seen as a negative. Witches who demonstrate masculinity can be argued as a positive as they subvert traditional depictions of gender by interrogating the spaces between masculinity and femininity. For example, this article argues that Pratchett's Eskarina in *Equal Rites* demonstrates a mixture of masculinity and femininity and subverts the stability of gender. This can be noted in how Weatherwax notices and comments on Eskarina's masculine interests. When Weatherwax watches Eskarina, in order to check if the child demonstrates abilities similar to that of wizards, the witch points out how the child acts like a tomboy: 'the girl spent more time climbing trees and running around shouting than little girls normally did'.[40]

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[37] Ibid., p. 290.
[38] Marc Burrows, *The Magic of Terry Pratchett* (Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Books Ltd, 2020), p. 51.
[39] Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (London: Duke University Press, 1998), p. xi.
[40] Pratchett, *Equal Rites*, p. 26.

Halberstam suggests that 'tomboyism generally describes an extended childhood period of female masculinity', and Eskarina demonstrates female masculinity with their interests.[41] Eskarina is an interesting character who demonstrates the queering of gender by revealing the fragility of masculinity and femininity. Eskarina shows a more nuanced depiction of gender and challenges the division as well as the stability of masculinity and femininity by suggesting that they can be both a witch and a wizard. Although Eskarina has been given the staff, connecting them to wizardry, they also demonstrate an interest in witchcraft after their lessons with Weatherwax. Experience teaches Eskarina that, conventionally, witches are female, and wizards are men, however they challenge these gender roles by suggesting 'she'd be a witch and a wizard *too*. And she would *show* them'.[42] Judith Butler suggests that:

> to assume that gender always and exclusively means the matrix of the 'masculine' and 'feminine' is precisely to miss the critical point that the production of that coherent binary is contingent, that it comes at a cost, and that those permutations of gender which do not fit the binary are as much a part as its most normative instance.[43]

Butler's argument that gender doesn't always conform to either 'masculine' or 'feminine' can be demonstrated in the character of Eskarina. Eskarina, with their desire to be a witch and wizard, can be seen as beyond gender as they blur the boundaries of masculinity and femininity. Eskarina can be seen as queering gender with their desire to be both wizard and witch; although they're aware of the inherent misogyny demonstrated by wizards, they still wish to challenge the men who say they can't be one by uniting witch and wizard magic.

Although Eskarina demonstrates tomboyism and the instability of gender, masculinity can be noted in Pratchett's witches in various ways. Monica Germanà suggests that 'in resisting the boundaries of normative femininity, the witch consequently defies the foundations of masculinity and patriarchal authority'.[44] This article concurs with Germanà, as when the witch challenges normative depictions of gender, they break the foundations of traditional masculinity. Ogg is a good example of a witch who subverts the binary notions of gender with their ability to straddle masculine and feminine traits. Although at face value Ogg appears gender normative with their extended family and history of heterosexual marriages, a queer reading of their character shows they're not confined to the heteropatriarchal, nuclear family. Ogg may be a mother, however they challenge the assumption that childrearing is inevitably heteronormative with their blurring of gender, by focusing on their coven over another heterosexual marriage, and their connections to the posthuman. Monsters have an unfixed identity and traditional female monsters have been argued as emphasising gender-bending characteristics, such as taking on male

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[41] Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, p. 5.

[42] Pratchett, *Equal Rites*, p. 26.

[43] Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 42.

[44] Monica Germanà, *Scottish Women's Gothic and Fantastic Writing: Fiction since 1978* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2010), p. 65.

physical properties and adopting traits of masculinity. Ogg's connection to the ogre has already been discussed, however their masculine traits are also apparent in the artwork of Paul Kidby. In *The Art of Discworld* there's an image of Ogg sat in a chair, a cigar in their left hand, and a tankard of beer in their right. Their mannerisms are presented as stereotypically mannish and, physically, as suggested with the ogre comparison, they look traditionally masculine. Even in Kidby's royal mail stamp illustration Ogg is seen as drinking a tankard of beer and looking comparable to an ogre. Halberstam argues that the 'widespread indifference to female masculinity […] has clearly ideological motivations and has sustained the complex social structures that wed masculinity to maleness and to power and domination'.[45] Ogg can be seen as a queer icon with the way they challenge the social construction of gendered stereotypes, masculinity, and maleness by demonstrating masculinity of their own. Butler is renowned for her notion of gender performativity, where she suggests that gender is a social construct, a construct that is based on performative, reiterative acts that are repeated. Ogg, with their performance of stereotypical masculinity, adheres to Butler's notion and demonstrates gender as a social construct by challenging traditional depictions of gender; even their smoking of cigars/pipes connects to phallic imagery. Germanà states that, when it comes to the witch, there are many '(physical) attributes suggesting her inherent 'masculinity': her sharp nose and nails, her broomstick and pointy hood are all equally revelatory of the phallic symbolism associated with the witch's sexualised body'.[46] This masculine and phallic imagery demonstrated in Pratchett's witches can also be noticed in *Equal Rites* where Eskarina points out that Weatherwax has 'got a long nose'.[47] Furthermore, Pratchett's witches often wear the traditional witches' hat, fly on broomsticks, and, in the example of Eskarina, own a staff. Alice Nuttall suggests that 'Discworld's folk songs reinforce the gendered nature of magic; wizard magic is universally associated with symbols of masculinity, as crudely indicated through the popular song 'A Wizard's Staff Has a Knob on the End'.[48] The popular song mentioned by Nuttall is sung by a drunken Ogg in *Wyrd Sisters*, it crudely and obviously points out the phallic symbolism of the wizard's staff and its connections to masculinity. As Eskarina owns a staff it connects them to the image of masculinity, an image that Pratchett was apparently keen to display. Burrows, when discussing a Josh Kirby illustration for the cover of *Equal Rites*, states that:

> Pratchett was delighted with the cover, and was especially pleased with the way Esk's staff gushes magic from its tip while held in a position which is noticeably phallic, seeing it as proof that Kirby saw to the heart of his work.[49]

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[45] Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, p. 2.
[46] Germanà, *Women's Gothic*, pp. 65-66.
[47] Pratchett, *Equal Rites*, p. 26.
[48] Alice Nuttall, 'Be a Witch, Be a Woman: Gendered Characterisation of Terry Pratchett's Witches', in *Terry Pratchett's Narrative Worlds: From Giant Turtles to Small Gods*, ed. by Marion Rana (Cham: Springer Nature, 2018) pp. 23-36 (p. 24).
[49] Burrows, *Terry Pratchett*, p. 119.

On the cover Eskarina is holding the staff/broomstick to their side and is pointing it forward towards a wizard, with white stars spurting from the end; a very overt, phallic image. However, although this shows connections to masculinity, Eskarina's owning of the staff blurs the boundaries of gender in two ways: firstly, by having a 'female' owning it when a staff is only owned by a man, and, secondly, by the way that Eskarina hides their staff in a broomstick. Traditionally, only a witch, who is usually seen as female, would own a broomstick, and only a wizard, a man, would own a staff; by combining the two Eskarina does more than simply join a staff and a broomstick, it can also be seen as a metaphor for the blurring of masculinity and femininity.

Another representation of female masculinity often associated with the witch is the image of facial hair. The bearded witch is frequently demonstrated in early modern plays with the most well-known example being that of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1605). In *Macbeth* when the three witches approach Macbeth and Banquo, Banquo comments on the appearance of the witches and implies that they can't be women due to their facial hair.

> What are these,
>
> So withered, and so wilde in their attire,
>
> That look not like th' inhabitants o'th' earth
>
> And yet are on't?
>
> […]
>
> You should be women,
>
> And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
>
> That you are so.[50]

Banquo's dialogue demonstrates the queering of gender that the witches perform: although they're referred to as 'sisters', which would suggest they're women, they also demonstrate physical masculinity which brings their gender into question. Furthermore, Banquo's suggestion that the witches don't look like inhabitants of the earth suggests their connections to the posthuman. This shows that the bearded witch was seen as not only genderqueer but also as monstrous, suggesting that any 'woman' who didn't physically conform to social expectations of femininity was seen as posthuman. This image of the bearded witch noted in *Macbeth* can be argued as influencing the work of Pratchett, who even used Shakespeare's witch characters, often referred to as 'the weird sisters', as the title of one of his novels. For example, in *Equal Rites* Eskarina thinks about what, in their view, makes a witch: 'Witches were cunning, she recalled, […] and they did slightly suspicious, homely and organic magics and some of them had beards'.[51] Eskarina demonstrates how, in their experience, witches demonstrate overt, physical masculinity

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[50] William Shakespeare, 'Macbeth', in *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, 2nd edn, ed. by J. Jowett, W. Montgomery, G. Taylor, and S. Wells (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), pp. 969-994 (I. 3. 36-44).
[51] Pratchett, *Equal Rites*, p. 89.

with their facial hair. Pratchett's novels arguably connote beards with authority and power, especially as the majority of his wizards are described as bearded: 'Treatle was a wizard's wizard. He had the appropriate long bushy eyebrows, spangled robe and patriarchal beard'.[52] As Pratchett suggests a beard is patriarchal, the bearded witch can be seen as subverting patriarchal authority by reclaiming a patriarchal image as their own.

This demonstrates how the witch can be seen as a queer icon due to the way they present a nuanced depiction of gender. The witch, when argued as a lesbian, challenges gender essentialism by dismantling the roles of man/woman; as the witch in various historical and fictitious examples is shown as avoiding relations with men, they can follow Wittig's theory of the lesbian as a not-woman. Instead, they become a queer Other, one whose difference can be celebrated as an alternative to the heteronormative. Furthermore, the witch's connection to a nuanced depiction of gender by challenging the differences between masculinity and femininity by interrogating the spaces between them, and to the themes of monstrosity and posthumanism, further presents the witch as a queer icon. The witch demonstrates the fragility of the social constructions of gender and, therefore, can be argued as beyond gender, and beyond human, by representing the figure of the ultimate queer Other.

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[52] Ibid., p. 151.

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The Gyrl's Tale

Ali Cargill

Content Warning: This short story contains elements of physical and sexual abuse.

The Gyrl's Tale

Ali Cargill

Break of day on the Friday and light silvers across the hills – forest, of fine, wise oak; birch that tremble green, silk-thin leaves; the doughty beech. More yet – a small village within: huddle of thatch and chimney. The sun is but a spell of dawn until it tops the trees and breaks to blaze across the square, where there is pump, stocks for pelting mischief-makers, and the gyrl chained fast to the stake. Sweet gyrl she looks, hair brown and tousled as a haystook. Bethsaby is her name, bright smile she is known to give, but not today for tears have wetted her cheeks to pale, and she, a-shake all the while as the faggots are piled, sees that Jon Winterton does the greatest share of the work in building the pyre, and knows he will make her burn.

The crowd comes; a torch is lit. But there is one who will act, if he can: Jack Todd, in this tale as one in the village of Hamley who, before these horrid events, did reasonably well with Bessie the cow, and chickens, and geese in the yard. Poor Jack: he had thought to engage a maid to help with chores, nothing more! Jack has his loop of wire, and takes himself quietly in hand, and waits.

There is wind across the square, and Jon Winterton raises one hand high as if, with his long white fingers, he would call God upon the gathering. 'Confess, gyrl,' he cries, 'that you are in league with the Devil! Tell now of his coming upon you and begetting the spawn that grows within you!'

She quakes. 'I will not,' she says. 'The Devil did not come upon me, no.'

No the Devil it was not. Burn me if you will, but through the threads of all the days that follow I'll weave, and even as my wracked shell is stripped of flesh, my tears scorched to air, still my burnt-bone fingers will twitch, heave from the embers to inch 'cross earth and stone' to find you.

'Look how her eyes darken! She claims for the Devil, still!' cries Jon Winterton, and, like the nimblest rat that ever scat across a barn floor, he grasps the torch and leaps to thrust the flame hard into the faggots.

The wood is dry; the faggots catch, quick oh quick in the wind that riffles the village square where the crowd is gathered. Jack grips his wire. He sees at the last, full and plain, what Devil's game has been played – but her dress already is hemmed in bright fire!

'Bethsaby – my Beth. Dear God.' Jack pulls the wire taut between his hands, and leaps to the faggots, and would fasten it round Bethsaby's neck and bring quick, painless end. But Winterton is quicker. He pulls Jack away; the wind works the flames high and hot, and Jack falls to his knees and covers first his eyes with his scorched hands, then his ears to shut away the sound of her first scream.

To burn! A creature's instinct is to flee from flames like these which come now with great crackle and blisterful heat. How she twists and strains, as if her legs would run! Weep into the soil, Jack. The crowd must look – mouths gape, close up in sorrow. Someone – friend William – puts a hand to Jack's shoulder. Small comfort, which he shrugs away.

Twice more she shrieks. The watchers cringe. The body hangs limp and is engulfed. All hair is fast burnt up. Roast stench is on the wind: skin's crackled on the bone. Blood boils, fat runs from peeling flesh to fuel the pyre. The eyes bubble and run. Those who can bear to watch, still, see a hand curled; a finger raised as if to point.

Point at you! I'll call my fragments, creep them inch by inch, climb them up you to tickle your nose, scratch in your ear, score your cheek for blood, and then, then.

With time, the faggots fall to ash. The crowd has dispersed. All except Jack, kneeling still, and Jon Winterton. Jack looks up, and sees the thin mouth amidst the wire-haired beard, the raging of a monster in those red eyes.

'Have a care, Jack Todd,' says Jon Winterton. 'Stay Godly, lest you enter into a pact yourself with the Devil.'

'That,' says Jack, coming to his feet, 'I never have and will never do.' He wipes his face with his raw hands, comes eye to eye with Jon Winterton. 'You'd best move on, Jon Winterton.' He spits a gobbet to the red earth. Winterton, seeing the potential for his own end in that gritted stare, turns and strides away.

Oh Jack. Two years it is, or more, since his wife passed too soon from this world. The days have lain heavy on him; her going has made of him a man of quiet mood, time spent by his hearth, tankard of ale got for himself alone. Such song, then, Bethsaby brought to his house! How she clapped, and danced, and ruffled his hair – and he, finding himself greeting the next morning with a smile as he fetched his plate to table.

The crowd has crawled to home, and now Jack must too, to take ale and stare long hours at that same hearth gone cold.

Later – how much later my Jack isn't sure – he stands at the kitchen door, washing the last of his ale down hard, as if to score his throat clean of smoke. The smell haunts however often he draws upon his cup.

A red sunset spills kicked embers across the horizon; the night comes on in blue settling. William will have been out checking the remains of his purifying fires, set earlier at field's edge. Tomorrow, the cattle will be turned out to graze on spring pasture. There should be Bel Teine dances, ale, and pie in the village square. Now, there will be nothing but smoke still, in the air.

Jack is as a shadow on the doorstep in the calling dark, until it comes upon his mind that there are remains to sift for, still, in the village square – small fragments to deal with.

Call on William, Jack – he's not yet abed. Together you can gather sack and tool, and return to the square to the cooling pyre.

Yes later, Jack returns, and brings William Thatcher besides, and they dig – careful, delicate – within the ash. The skull they find, and several longer pieces, and knobbles and scraps – and several fragments, smaller than the wishbone of a hen run in the yard too long and kept too thin. They gather the bones and lay them under the earth, near the

dwelling of the hanged crone, but one hand only, digits intact, they find, and the jaw of the skull they cannot close no matter how they try, and they must leave it to gape in eternal scream.

Scream if you will for then! On waking early, you will find inside your chops small grits, and pebbles, between your teeth and on your tongue and in your throat to bring you up from your sweated bed to swill and spit and in the bowl your spittings will be cloudy, mud-swirled. How so? you'll think. See you not my wide smile, in the dark?

Thursday eve, sunset

Then a night to endure, before first light comes to Winterton's declaration: Bethsaby's soul should be cleansed of all evil by elemental means. He orders faggots brought, and a stake knocking in the earth, and retires to his bed.

To the barn Bethsaby is taken, a shift, no more, provided to cover her bodily shame. The moonless night long she will shiver, while Bessie works the hay in her jaw and the rats scurry.

Jack Todd paces the flagstones of his kitchen. 'I'll not think it of her, I'll not!' says he. 'I'll go to Samuell Farne. Happen this is his work that makes Beth's belly swell with child. Natural and wholesome would be the coupling of her with Samuell – and their handfasting to come next Beltane – and there is something unnatural about the workings of Jon Winterton, I've felt it so.'

He runs full five miles in dark cross-country. The hills between his village and the next are bright with dabs of bonfires where the cattle have already been driven in the cleansing.

Hammer on the door of the cottage of Samuell Farne, Jack. He'll come mumbling, tired, having not long returned from hard labour in his fields.

'What is it, Jack?' Samuell Farne cries, seeing Jack without, and in a great state of agitation.

'Has news not reached you?'

'I've been at stamping down the pyres from driving the cattle. What news?'

Jack Todd blurts his tale, while the face of Samuell Farne grows pale. 'Dear God,' says Farne. 'Dear God.'

He crosses himself, at which point Jack stamps hard upon the ground: 'Listen, Samuell. I'm gravely feared for Bethsaby. The Witch Pricker is in full sway in Hamley – he accuses her of consorting with the Devil as incubus! Could this babe that grows within her be of your making? Only say it is so, and she must surely be saved.'

But Samuell Farne shakes his head, crosses himself again. 'I had hoped that Beth and I, come next Beltane – but witchcraft! With-child, you say.' Frown lays heavy upon his face. 'That will be no bairn of mine,' says he. 'Bethsaby has not given herself to me so.'

'The Pricker had her stripped. Such a shameful thing to see, it was! It was plain – too plain, Samuell. She carries a mite, growing.'

'In one thing you are correct then, Jack. Shameful it is. If you'll forgive me, I need some quiet.'

At sunrise she will burn. Winterton's well placed to snore these hours through, but Jack Todd, once more at his cottage, will be wakeful the night long. He'll pace the flagstones and pull his hair and realise too late that his tender feelings for Bethsaby have turned to something more than friendship should allow.

You did not see it, Jack? The difference in you, when came her jaunty step through your kitchen, your voice finding morning song as she churned the butter, clucked at the chickens. You'd have declared the unborn child your own, to save your Beth from the flames. Why did you not think, in time?

As the sky grows pale, Jack admits to his sleepless self the likely end to this. But – to find a way to make of it something quick, where she should feel no pain! That much he can do. He'll pull a wire tight about her neck as the torch is put to the pyre. It'll break her, as a noose will break a fox in its running, so she'll feel not the scorch of the flames.

So it is agreed in him, and this is timely, for the sun now peeps over the treetops and lights the window, and Jack Todd knows the time for his love's burning is come.

Come the next night, and the next, you will find such things in your mouth that bring you to waking: pebbles more, small clod of earth. You'll take to sleeping on your belly, but find your pillow mud-dribbled, stones worked into the cloth. When you wake, you will smell the reek of decay, bitter-tinged with smoke. My fingers will yet be at your face!

Noon, the Thursday

and here's a sight: a whimpering crone soon to hang. Her greyed hair spills in clots down her back; no time to wind it, dragged as she was from her hedgewise home.

Winterton comes upon the crowd in full sway as he cries, 'See! She, so bent with wickedness!'

'Oh save me!' calls the crone, and though one here or there would speak of the need for a trial, many others answer, 'Hang the witch!' and one or two think of a mark on their skin, and stay silent. At which time, concealed amongst the watchers, one with a dread of her own stumbles yes Bethsaby falls in faint and the crowd parts, and Jon Winterton's rat's eye falls upon her, and takes in most fully her condition.

Oh, Jon Winterton he is quick. Across ground he can skitter, quick as any of teeth and tail. So Bethsaby swoons to her knees, and he straightway cries, 'Why does this gyrl faint almost away at the very moment another witch calls out?' His cloak swirls in a wind of his own making as he pulls Beth fully to her feet.

'But see – this is one gyrl I've struggled with over days,' he says. Keeping fast hold of her, he turns and his eye catches that of Jack, owner of yard and geese which hissed and pecked at Jon Winterton when he called to take vittles or visit the dark barn for his own

darker purpose. 'Is this not the gyrl Bethsaby, with whom lately I did battle in the name of God?' he asks.

'It is,' says Jack Todd, though quietly.

'Is this not the gyrl whom I pronounced as owned by the very Devil himself?'

'It is,' says Jack. 'Though,' he says, 'you then pronounced her saved, I thought.'

'Oh abomination!' cries Jon Winterton, seeming not to hear. 'For I see, that despite my every effort to oust the Devil, he has won out – for see, her swelling condition!'

'Wait, wait!' says Jack. 'This has not been properly tested. You cannot pronounce her in the Devil's game without proof, Sire. You said so yourself.'

Brave statement indeed. There are murmurs of agreement, but Jon Winterton pulls Bethsaby to the pump where stands the bent crone, her greyed hair loose and uncapped, and she grown cold and weak from fear of her own hanging.

'This gyrl must be pricked!' Jon Winterton declares. 'For proof, or innocence, though by God her belly should be enough evidence of the Devil's sport!' Bethsaby weeps, but her hands are bound, and Jon Winterton tears Beth's clothing from her until she stands full naked before all, and her rounding belly is clear to see.

Jack Todd would avert his eyes but sees, still, Winterton's long fingers squeezed about Beth's arm. He looks to the ground, catches sight, still, of Winterton's hard-buffed boots as he strikes his witch-pricker's pose. Unscuffed by stone they are. Undusted by honest earth. Jack looks up. 'What need to prick her though?' he calls. 'You said her saved!'

'Who cries out so?' says Winterton, scanning the faces before him. 'Who would believe himself better knowing than the King's man?'

William Thatcher is quick to Jack's side. 'Jack, have a care,' he says. ''Tis risky to sport with this man.'

Jack turns to him. 'Call this justice?'

'Call it what you like. Stay quiet Jack, or there's surely a couple here will mutter of you in Winterton's ear. You have moods; you're known for it.'

'This isn't right,' says Jack, but Will's grip is fierce. Stir not a nest of snakes, lest one fat-necked forked tongue strikes.

Jon Winterton fetches out his witch-pricker – a brass pin, wood-handled, some three inches long – and the crowd murmurs. 'Her skin is clear,' some agree amongst themselves, quietly, in low mutters. 'But she is clear with-child.' 'Of who's making, the babe?'

He pricks; the gyrl flinches. 'Oh,' cries the crowd as one. All over he pricks, till Bethsaby's breasts are full-beaded. Still she cries her pain, and in the huddle of watching bodies, mutterings grow. Jack studies the straw-scattered earth, the dungballs trampled underfoot.

From the rear of the crowd, safely away from Winterton's glare, a call: 'She feels it! Innocent!'

'Or ripe for swinging,' calls another, to cheers, some jeers, small scuffle back there.

'She's but a gyrl, nothing more,' says yet another, to general agreement.

Winterton scans the villagers to gauge the mood. 'She is clear,' he says – and at this the crowd sighs, and there is clapping – Jack Todd looks up – 'unless, as I believe, the Devil has left his marks in coming to her as incubus!'

All about him gasp (though one or two scuffle still at the back ,and would use fists should anyone chance to try out against them). Jon Winterton now dwells on the gyrl's flesh greatly, and she shrinks away, but he persists, until his sharp eyes and long fingers find marks that have festered after some dread work upon her body, and which are still not fully healed. 'See!' he cries. 'The Devil's marks upon her thighs, made as he came as incubus upon her!'

Winterton, with his witchfinder's weapon, pricks the sore flesh of her tender thigh, but Bethsaby cannot call out her pain in timely fashion. He stands away, and holds his bloodless pin aloft, and pronounces with solemn purpose that she is a witch and undoubtedly in league with the Devil himself for what more evidence can there be than the marks of the Devil's own teeth upon her flesh which yet give her no pain, and the signs of Satan's own child growing within her belly?

Jon Winterton's work is well done this day. Bethsaby he orders locked away till a pyre be built. For the crone, a rope is fetched, and she is taken to the oak tree at the village boundary, and there the rope is fastened about her neck, and looped over a worthy branch, from where the crone swings. Her feet tread the space below until they grow still and in the air about her there is peace

Peace will your soul never find. Sisters we are in our deaths, young and old, yet joined as one in our intent, and for us both I bring it to this: one dread night, while the moon hides and foxes scream, you will dream that your mouth is full; stuffed, your jaw will be from your greedy feasting, and when you wake you will find your throat stoppered you will cough you will choke.

Two hours previous

And how came it to this? How indeed, for there's Jon Winterton out striding, pulling at his beard, and he happens upon the bent crone, living hedgewise and in quiet healing as ever.

'Who is the old woman?' says Jon Winterton to those he sees in his striding. What is it she does? How Godly is she?'

The villagers – Jack Todd and William Thatcher among them – feel a danger brewing in the dark shadows that fall in the folds of Jon Winterton's cloak.

'She is a good woman,' says William Thatcher. 'She means no harm. She lives hedgewise and heals.'

'She heals?' says Jon Winterton. 'By what means does she heal?'

'She mixes goodly herbs,' says William. ''Tis all God's way.'

'God's way?' cries Jon Winterton and draws himself up tall. 'Such tampering with herbs and the like is the way of the Devil. This village has in its midst a witch, or I'm not here in the service of the King! Summon all to the square! Fetch the crone!'

The crone is quickly stripped, quicker pricked, fast pronounced witch.

What of Bethsaby? She brings her hands to her mouth, for what if her visit to the crone becomes known? The gyrl's heart flutters like a bird bramble-caught, lest he lays eye upon her – for here is Jon Winterton, with his sharp eyes watching and his feared weapon. The crowd is close, the air too warm. Darkness swims about her and all the day turns dark on pale.

Pale will your skin turn, blenched you will be and how you will choke while these burnt-stick fingers of mine will plug your mouth with crepid flesh and you will feel yourself swallow bone; struggle if you will but my grip will only harden to match your heart – your evil heart.

Weeks before this dark day

The gyrl feels the quickening. The workings of nature, when once begun, are hard to call to halt: soon all will see! Her tears fall fast and rich, the more so when she thinks of Samuell Farne, and all that now that will be lost, and she no doubt cast out. It cannot, must not, come to that!

Can it not?

The gyrl pays a visit to the bent crone who lives hedgewise, with ancient ways. Upon hearing Bethsaby's tale, which she cannot help but tell in full, the crone reaches out and takes the gyrl's small hands in her own. The crone's hands are dry and clawed, her skin mottled with hard veins branching. They are good hands; they are warm hands; Bethsaby feels herself a little calmed.

'Poor poppet,' says the crone. A small black cat winds itself round the gyrl's ankles, purrs.

The crone makes a poultice to ease the festering which has set into Bethsaby's wounds, and a potion of such things as tansy and mugwort that might, if taken daily for a week or more, let slide from the gyrl's body this abomination.

Sick, oh sick Bethsaby is from the crone's workings and this bitter water. But still the mite inside her hangs on, and the gyrl's waist thickens.

Two months previous

This is the day when he comes to the barn and pulls Bethsaby to the darkest corner where the straw bales are stacked, and where the rats run. He lays his hand upon her breast, pronounces her in the grasp of Satan.

Satan himself could not torment me as did you! Over and over, I feel the hooks on your doublet scrape red across my flesh; your meat-stinking beard graze my skin; your fingers dig and bruise. You scribed pain upon my body.

All the while Bessie stands and works the hay round in her bovine mouth, till Winterton leaves Bethsaby to roll as might a shovel-smashed fieldmouse, limp in straw.

Later, Winterton pronounces to Jack Todd that he feels Bethsaby is more at peace. 'Let us see,' Winterton says, dribbling mead into his beard. 'Let us see how she fares.'

So it is that Bethsaby, in the days that follow, goes about her duties in quiet – eyes cast down. Perhaps in time Jon Winterton will stride to the next village, and on. For there is Samuell Farne, still, and the barn and its dark corners will soon be but a story told only to herself, at least for now.

You will feel the chill touch of my fingers to your face which will sit you up sharp! You will taste bitter earth, and when you feel with your own fingers inside your mouth, you will find it filling already with leaves, and mud, and crawling things, and you will gasp and spit and with shaking fingers you will pull, but more will come – black, wriggling, clicking, awful things of the earth. Turn, turn and choke into your pillow: you will feel such beetled crawl in your beard, sliding down your gullet, still crawling, still wriggling.

Months Previous

Winterton visits often, but Bethsaby cries to Jack Todd that prayers with that man are not needed, no not at all. Jack feels himself twined within a net.

'This man is in the service of the King; his hand upon you is by proxy the King's and thus by divine right the hand of God Himself – or so he will say. Let him feel he does God's work. Pray a little. It won't harm you.'

Each day, having nought else to do besides her chores but turn more Godly, Bethsaby kneels. At such times, Jon Winterton comes upon her so doing, and lays his hand upon her, and these times she keeps her eyes closed, and clasps her hands, and whispers fervent prayer. But as Jon Winterton's fingers creep toward her warm flesh, her skin in turn creeps and she begins to shake.

'We will have him out, you'll see,' says Jon Winterton.

So Bethsaby holds her trembling hands in plea to God, and cringes, but still there is Bessie to be milked, though the barn with its dark corners is what Bethsaby most fears, because it seems to her that Jon Winterton is of the darkness, the kind of darkness that will smoke and gather in a dark corner then leap like a rat, all bite, and sinuous tail, and bloodied eyes.

Eyes you will have as their vessels pop and burst and you rise, heaving, and now, now Jon Winterton, my fingers close on your throat, and the air is smoke and hot with the crackle of flame which sears your flesh, peels your skin, runs your fat from you

Only two weeks before, it is

Jon Winterton calls at the house of Jack Todd, and strides into the kitchen, and pronounces himself concerned for the Bethsaby's soul.

'She trembles at my most Godly touch, and this could perchance be the beginnings of the Devil working to claim her as his own,' he says.

'Not Bethsaby,' says Jack Todd. 'I've seen nought but goodness from her. A dear gyrl to me, she is.'

'The devil insinuates himself among the purest of us if we work not to keep God close,' says Winterton. 'I will call to pray with her and so keep God's grace upon her.'

'My thanks to you,' says Jack Todd, showing Winterton to the door.

'Pardon me, but my stomach is all a-rumble with hunger!' says Winterton.

'Some mead and meat then,' says Jack Todd, knowing the way of it by now, and having heard it also from others in the village, and Winterton takes his seat.

Days Previous

All is well in the village until he comes, calling himself Jon Winterton and swinging his cloak and pulling on his beard and pronouncing himself in the service of the King. Jon Winterton strides out and calls upon the villagers to abandon the dark and poisonous roots of their godless ways, turn their eyes only to worship of the one and only God the Father. Or else suffer.

His eye is not on God, however, but falls instead upon one young gyrl and watches her at each passing, and she feels the scorch of his gaze.

Such fear Jon Winterton brings! A shadow in his footfall, soured air hot in his breath. Such grapplings with the Devil he must have had!

He calls at the home of Jack Todd. 'Fetch meat, bread and mead,' says Jack, which Jon Winterton will take in the parlour, alone, as befits a true wearer of the finest cloth. Bethsaby steps lightly about it, but Winterton pulls her to him, slides his hand under her skirts; she twists to come away but is caught fast, hare in a snare.

'Are you not the Devil's servant?' he says into her neck, and her dimpled smile, her merry ways are hid at his horrid touch.

She finds herself a-tremble as she replies, 'No, Sire! I am godly and promised to Samuell Farne from the next village. We are to wed next Beltane.'

At last she makes good her escape. Jon Winterton drains his mead, and chews on his bread and meat, and wipes the grease from his fingers on his shirt, not so fine after all, and in the kitchen Bethsaby sits, and I think, on how it was, until he came.

The Beginning

For there is Jack Todd, who does reasonably well in the village of Hamley with a cow, and chickens, and there is a yard with geese fattening for Samhain, which hiss and peck and drive out those who come unwanted. A lonesome sort I'm told, but goodly, given to spending time with a quiet mood, and ale, and his hearth. He has lately thought to engage a gyrl to milk the cow, and fetch eggs, and turn butter, and help with the laundry.

When my chores are done, I skip out with spirits high and my heart already given to Samuell Farne from the next village and it is in the eye of next Beltane we are due to wed, when we will say our vows and I will wear a garland of May flowers.

Oh marry gip! say I, and clap, and dance about the house, and ruffle Jack's hair, and I see that he finds less room for ale in his belly, more room these days in his heart for laughter. Truly, I hope I bring some light into the life of Jack Todd, and in return he shows me such love and care as is fair and right.

Before you die, you see the shape of a young gyrl, hear her call to curse, in your fading. But there is no more breath in your body to say so.

Nor anyone to hear.

Finis

CONTRIBUTORS

David Briggs is in his first year of a PhD in Creative Writing at the University of Exeter, studying midlife transition and 'middle style' in post-1945 poetry. His own poetry has appeared in a wide range of magazines, including *The Poetry Review*, *Poetry Wales*, *New Statesman*, and *Poetry London*, and he has published three full collections with Salt: *The Method Men* (2010); *Rain Rider* (2013); and *Cracked Skull Cinema* (2019), a Poetry Wales Book of the Year, which he completed during a sabbatical as poet-in-residence at the University of Bristol. He is studying part-time, while teaching in Bristol.

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