

BETWEEN SILENT LINES: WALT WHITMAN
IMAGINES POSSIBLE FUTURES FOR MINORITIES IN
POST-EMANCIPATION AMERICA

By

LEAH PALMER

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Oklahoma Baptist University

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Thesis Approved:

Dr. William Decker

Thesis Adviser

Dr. Richard Frohock

Dr. Randi Eldevik

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Name: LEAH PALMER

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Abstract: “Between Silent Lines” investigates the degree to which Walt Whitman’s poetic catalogues of American culture are influenced by contemporaneous nineteenth century theories, which aimed to imagine the future of minority races in America. This essay specifically examines the Vanishing Indian theory, Darwin’s evolutionary theory, as well as Abolitionist theories. I focus primarily on Section 7 of “I Sing the Body Electric,” in which Whitman interrogates the limbs of a black man at auction. Using excerpts from Whitman’s notebooks and published revisions of *Leaves of Grass*, I show that Whitman is susceptible to subscribing to dominant contemporaneous theories about race, and the poet conflates these theories in his representations of African Americans on the auction block.

Because he lived through the antebellum period as well as the Civil War, Whitman’s poetry reveals a concern for the future of a country that is at odds with regards to the civil rights of African Americans. Whitman asserts that minority races in America would inevitably and sadly be eliminated from the country, as they are unable to withstand the force of Manifest Destiny and the rise of an American republic. However, Whitman’s notion is at conflict with his promotion of abolition and the equality of all men, regardless of race. Therefore, Section 7 expresses hope for the equality of all men while it simultaneously despairs the black man’s future in America. Still Whitman imagines that equality between the dominant white race and minorities is contentment on biological evolution—losing blackness by degree and assimilating to white culture and its definitions of progress. My essay aims to explore Whitman’s solution to the contemporaneous black problem, which rests in the poet’s hope for physical and societal progress among blacks.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

As a person of mixed heritage—African American, Hispanic, and Native American—I have often experienced a disturbingly weak connection to all of these cultures. From my perspective, my parents always hoped to offer me a quality education, spiritual foundation, and a supportive local community. It seems my parent’s goals for their children naturally pushed our family away from ghetto schools in Del City and into a homeschool environment. These goals also removed my father from his home church, and they moved our family into a church that was better funded and offered useful guidance for their parenting and marriage. As such, through my development, I was enlightened in these arenas by and among white people. I comfortably occupied the minority space, sometimes forgetting my difference. However, I grew less comfortable with the fact that my upbringing sequestered me from a part of myself—my ethnic community as determined by my heritage. I worried that if I were to visit Choctaw country, or North East Oklahoma City, I would likely feel remarkably out of place.

Thus, I set out in my Master’s program at Oklahoma State University to learn about the heritages I felt so far removed from. By studying literature from both the African American and Native American traditions, I thought I could gain some insight into myself. I hoped my understanding of these cultures would assist my own racial identity formation.

I quickly realized my motives for studying multiethnic literature often assumed an essential notion of how black or Native identity is meant to look. As a result, my lines of inquiry shifted, and I began to ask more useful questions about race in America: What forces support or suppress the minority's individual or group identity? How does racial identity become more complicated for the mixedblood literary character?

As illustrated by the above questions, my research always begins with inquiry as well as a personal stake in the literature—a hope that by researching a particular topic, I can illuminate the unknown. I may take weeks to ponder and analyze a text, but soon this stage propels me to delve into scholarly arguments. Additionally, in observing the essays contained in this portfolio I note trends in my writing that reflect a need to contextualize literature within a specific historical or theoretical moment. Another strategy I have developed comes from my recurring interest in essentialized, tropes or archetypes, which are upheld by outsiders to describe minority individuals. Among others, these include the vanishing Indian, the noble savage, and the tragic mulatto. I often engage research on tropes—their origins and their ability to infiltrate societal conviction—to understand how transcultural characters are perceived by authors and their readers.

My studies in race theory are influenced by early enlightenment philosophes who explore race and racial categorization, trusting in stereotypes to define “African,” or “Native American.” These scholars include Francois Bernier's in his essay, “A New Division of the Earth,” and Immanuel Kant in “Of the Different Human Races.” I draw from Bernard Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees* because Mandeville illustrates the small ways in which imperialism and the slave trade was promoted and perpetuated through eighteenth century economics. I also rely on Edward Said's “Orientalism” to fuel my desire to undo essentialist notions about minorities, especially the mixedblood character. I have been fascinated by Julia Kristeva's interpretation of Lacan's mirror state. In her essay, “Woman's Time,” Kristeva argues that mothers are a kind of mirror in which

children can begin to self-identify, which supports my argument in my essay about *Wide Sargasso Sea* that family and family resemblance plays a paramount role in identity formation and racial actualization.

For Native theory, I continually reexamine Philip Deloria's book, *Indians in Unexpected Places*, for a framework on Native history as well as his discussion on the anomalous Native figure. Likewise, I draw from Louis Owens' discussion of mixedblood Natives in his book, *Mixed Messages: Literature, Film, Family, Place*. Though his discussion is specific to the Ojibwe community, his conception of the multicultural experience can be translated to other cultures. Owens plays a major role in my understanding of Pauline in Louise Edrich's *Tracks*, whose mixed identity isolates her from both the Ojibwe and white communities in which she attempts to interact.

Finally, I examine Darwinian evolution as a major paradigm shift in the nineteenth century. I see Darwin's "Origin of Species," and subsequent works, as influential in supporting institutional and internalized racism. Darwin argues for the notion of the fittest species and its dominance over all other species, and this scheme has often been transferred to discussions of the supposedly fittest and weakest races. Additionally, Darwin's theory of extinction substantiates notions of races that vanish through intermarriage and amalgamation. As seen in my major essay in this portfolio, Darwin's theories are critical to the development of my argument about Whitman's "I Sing the Body Electric." Whitman seems to be influenced by Darwin's theory to the point of holding a conviction that eventually minority races will disappear from America under the force of white, manifest dominance in the nation. Yet, Whitman was not the only nineteenth century thinker to grapple with Darwinian evolution; much of my studies in Native American history cite Darwinian evolution to support the Vanishing Indian theory, which still survives today. This theory places natives in natural history museums, as if tribal vitality is a

thing of the distant past. [Examples of my work on the above mentioned theories of race are located in the Appendix.]

My essay entitled, “Between Silent Lines: Walt Whitman Imagines Possible Futures for Minorities in Post-Emancipation America” allowed me to combine two seemingly separate fields of study. Most scholars of Native American literature would yield to Vine Deloria’s plea to never equate the Native experience to the black experience. Though I respect Deloria for asserting such a demand, I saw within Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* an opportunity to note an overlap in the theories that a white author uses to understand multiple minority groups. Therefore, this essay’s strength lies in its ability to conceive of Whitman in ways that are different from other scholars before me. Most would assume Whitman, who celebrates all, would also celebrate the future of minorities in America. However, I see that Whitman is influenced by contemporaneous theories that cause him to believe in the vanishing minority. I am also rather proud of the essay’s transformation through revision. Before reaching this final copy, the essay suffered from major organizational issues. Several of its sections opposed the development of my argument, and these problems undoubtedly limited the development of my major assertions. At one point, the essay was pared down from twenty-five pages to a meager sixteen in order to address these organizational problems.

If I were to submit “Between Silent Lines” for publication I would target my submission to the *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review*, edited by Ed Folsom. WWQR currently holds the most comprehensive collection of resource material and scholarly discourse about Whitman. According to the journal’s website, WWQR aims to publish, “essays about Whitman, his influence, his cultural contexts, his life, and his work.” Each issue publishes essays that primarily focus on one of Whitman’s major works; thus, my discussion of Section 7 of “I Sing the Body Electric” would be relevant to the journal.

CHAPTER II

BETWEEN SILENT LINES: WALT WHITMAN IMAGINES POSSIBLE FUTURES FOR MINORITIES IN POST-EMANCIPATION AMERICA

On March 18, 1846, Walt Whitman writes in the *Brooklyn Eagle* that the slave trade is “that most abominable of all man’s schemes for making money without regard to the character of the means used for the purpose” (*Eagle* 1846). As editor of the *Eagle*, Whitman was well versed with the politics of the antebellum period.¹ The nation endeavored to define citizenship and struggled to determine if enslaved Africans, a source of relatively free labor, should continue to be denied civil status and rights. Would slavery, and all of its evils, remain a key feature of America’s identity?

¹ The political tension associated with America’s endeavor to define the limits of its citizenship is evident in a series of laws passed within the decade: In 1863, Lincoln declared the Emancipation of all slaves, attempting to blot out the stain of inhuman labor conditions for an entire race. In 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery and involuntary servitude. It also defined that national identity was the right of all natural born citizens. This amendment excluded ex-slaves, as many were not born in the United States, but were seized from their homelands and brought to America. As such, the Thirteenth Amendment left an entire population unable to own property or legally labor for wages. This disservice to the newly emancipated black community spurred the 1868 Fourteenth Amendment, which qualified that national citizenship is a right of all people, regardless of race. Finally, the Fifteenth Amendment extended the right to vote to newly freed slaves.

Whitman joins the conversation, fully opposed to the inhumane enterprise as well as the laws that supported it, arguing that

... the laws should pry out every man who helps the slave-trade—not merely the sailor on the sea, but the *cowardly rich villain, and the speculator on the land*—and punish him. It cannot be stopped until that is done. (*Eagle* 1846)

In these excerpts from his political editorial, Whitman vehemently opposes slavery and its injustices, believing that all people are and should be treated as humans, regardless of skin color or ethnic origins.

Here, Whitman is a champion of equality, and in *Leaves of Grass* he would level humanity in his poetry, imagining all people, no matter how different, are like blades of grass—equally part of the beautiful cycle of life, death and revitalization.

Though his equality message is clear, Whitman's outlook on race and the future of African Americans in the United States is also full of complexities and even duplicities. Thus, the poet's words in the 1846 *Brooklyn Eagle* are only a snapshot by which to understand his notions of race in America. In fact, as Ed Folsom describes it in *Whitman's Native Representations*, the poet is indoctrinated by many dominant theoretical tendencies of the nineteenth century, even if these theories cannot be logically upheld simultaneously. Yet, Folsom adds that Whitman also “occasionally and remarkably transcend[s]” these biases and preconceptions (Folsom 69). In this essay, I will examine Section 7 of “I Sing the Body Electric,” in which the poet details his experience at a slave auction. I will show that Whitman's abolitionist goal of equality in America is influenced by Darwin's evolutionary theory as well as the theory of the Vanishing Indian, which complicates his deliberate 1846 opposition to slavery. I will argue that unlike traditional readings of this poem, Whitman hopes America will grant political equality for minorities, yet the poet simultaneously sees the vanishing of people of color as a natural, biological process.

In “I Sing the Body Electric,” Whitman argues that every human body he encounters is connected to a soul and is a divine expression. However, when he describes dark bodies, whether African American or Native American, the poet appears befuddled, unable to determine the proper way to catalogue their abject state. To show this, I specifically draw on his poems, “The Sleepers” and Section 10 of “Song of Myself,” which is also known as, “The Trapper’s Wedding.” In these poems, the central subject is a minority person who either gradually fades from the poem or becomes reduced to an artifact, like a statue in a natural history museum. In “The Trapper’s Wedding,” Whitman depicts the marriage between a white frontiersman and a Native woman. The mixed marriage is orchestrated in order to weaken the blood line of the Native, taking the Red Girl further away from savagism on the spectrum of Indian identity. And, according to this theory, the children of this mixed union would be more likely to adopt practices of Western civility, thereby extinguishing Native primitivism in America. In both cases, Whitman’s poems do not contain minority figures who experience the same rate of progress and change as his white subjects. What is more, Whitman struggles to envision a freed slave’s potential future as an American citizen in the expanding, post-Emancipation country. However, in “I Sing the Body Electric,” Whitman feels obligated to address the dark man and woman just as he addresses and celebrates white men and women.

Throughout Section 6, the poet pleads with his reader to acknowledge the divine equality of all people. Regardless of gender or class. Whitman considers all people to be sacred. In this Section, he thoroughly equalizes white males and females, rich and poor, asking,

No matter who it is, it is sacred—is it meanest one in the laborers’ gang?

It is one of the dull-faced immigrants just landed on the warf?

Each belongs here or anywhere just as much as the well-off, just as much as you,

Each has his or her place in the procession. (ISBE 6.11-14)

Thus, Whitman speaks on behalf of “each” person, regardless of categorization or distinction. He ends his survey of human equality by posing a challenging question to his reader: “Do you think matter has cohered together from its diffuse float, and the soil is on the surface, and water runs and vegetation sprouts, / For you only, and not for him and her?” (ISBE. 6.19-20) Here, the poet challenges idealized notions of a supreme race, class, or gender, who potentially believed in their divine right to sole ownership and responsibility for the Earth.

These passages from Section 6 act as an entry point into Whitman’s discussion of equality between races. In Section 7, the poet includes in his catalogue an African slave whose biography is unknown. This nameless man serves as an archetype for all slaves—sold into an unjust labor system that does not benefit the man’s well being.

Traditionally, readers of Section 7 find Whitman to be sympathetic, willing to illustrate the similarities between men and women of polarized races. Scholars see the poet emphasizing each person’s humanity despite differences, but readers and scholars often miss Whitman’s subtle conviction: that minorities, specifically, the black race will eventually disappear under the manifest destiny of the dominant white race.

In the 1855 “I Sing the Body Electric,” Whitman’s conviction is less evident, but over time and through revisions of the poem, he illustrates it more clearly. In 1855, Whitman begins Section 7 by rousing his readers’ attention, heralding, “A slave at auction!” Whitman depicts his own gaze on a black man’s body as the man stands on the auction block. As the poet lingers on the man’s physique, readers are encouraged to engage in a slightly erotic examination of the man’s body. Whitman declares his purpose for attending the slave auction, saying, “I help the auctioneer . . . the sloven does not half know his business.” The word “sloven” is of particular interest. Whitman suggests the auctioneer is indolent and careless with his task—to sell slaves—by ignoring the beauty of the human figure. In an exertion of his own authority, Whitman

assumes the role of auctioneer, using his ability to manipulate language to describe the man. The poet-auctioneer begins, “Gentleman look on this curious creature,²/ Whatever the bids of the bidders they cannot be high enough for him” (ISBE 7.4-5). Within these first lines, the poet-auctioneer undermines the activity of buying and selling humans at auction by suggesting there is no price high enough for the man. The same attitude that undermines the slave auction in 1855 persists in later versions of the poem. However, a few notable changes show the poet’s growing conviction that the black race will disappear.

Indeed, the most significant revision across all editions of Section 7 occurs in the first stanza. Originally, Whitman heralds, “A slave at auction!,” which more concretely situates the subject as African American. The following year, in 1856, Whitman replaces the word “slave” with “man,” which is in keeping with Whitman’s goal to equalize all men and women, despite racial distinctions. This small but profound revision occurs almost eight years before emancipation in 1863. Therefore, Whitman does not exchange “slave” for “man” merely to avoid the use of an obsolete term. Likewise, Whitman does not exchange the word “slave” for “man” in order to merely support the black man’s status as a human, equal to all other men. Instead, Whitman appears to sidestep the word “slave” in order to illustrate a man without racial classification and to cause readers to imagine they are like the man. As such, obvious racial distinguishers, such as skin pigmentation, eye color, hair texture, muscular build, etc. are entirely omitted from his depiction of the man at auction.

Whitman’s choice is odd considering the historical association between African American bodies and the auction block, but the omission seems deliberate. Instead of focusing on the man’s slave identity, the poet calls readers’ attention to what is beyond racial identity, looking on matter that exists underneath skin and directing the reader’s gaze to the man’s limbs. Whitman

² In 1891 version of this text, the word “creature” is replaced by “wonder.” In these later revisions, Whitman elevates the man from animalistic to awe-inspiring.

carries out a scientific observation of the man's limbs, suggesting that these could be the appendages of any person, despite racial classification, "red, black or white" (ISBE 7.10). This mention of specific ethnic groups is the first and only time in either published version of this Section that the poet specifically identifies the three major ethnicities assumed to constitute antebellum and post-war America. Quickly abandoning his mention of race, the poet instructs the audience to imagine peeling back the subject's skin:

Examine these limbs, red, black or white, they are cunning in tendon and nerve,

They shall be stript that you may see them,

Exquisite senses, life-lit eyes, pluck, volition,

Flakes of breast-muscle, pliant backbone and neck, flesh not flabby, good-sized arms

and legs,

And wonders within there yet. (ISBE, 7.10-14)

In these lines, Whitman scientifically and thoroughly observes the body as if under a microscope. He mimics the detailed observation of a biologist, looking closely on the man's form. Simultaneously, the poet-auctioneer encourages the crowd to gaze on the figure before them, suggesting the man's body is a representation of evolutionary changes across time. In keeping with his scientific approach to observing the figure, Whitman relies on evolutionary theory as one possible way to understand the future of black people in a changing America. Whitman looks back to the man's ancestry, insisting the globe has prepared the man's physical features across "quintillions of years..." for the "revolving cycles truly and steadily roll'd" (ISBE 7.6-7). For Whitman, the man's current appearance is the product of evolution's effect on the human race. Additionally, the man's body is an example of Darwin's biological theory that when varieties of the human species are crossed, through time and through generations, they will result in an

individual's unique, racialized appearance.³ Furthermore, the man is an embodiment of past generations and their genetic transformation across time, which Whitman illustrates in a concluding stanza of this poem:

This is not only one man . . . he is the father of those who shall be fathers in their
turns,

In him the start of populous states and rich republics,

Of him countless immortal lives with countless embodiments and enjoyments

(ISBE 7. 17-18)

By showing the man as a progenitor of children as well as the forbear of republican government, Whitman suggests a rich future is possible for the black man in America. Upon a first reading, Whitman's rhetoric, which is founded in evolutionary theory, may mislead readers to assume that Whitman believes African Americans will, without doubt, eventually prosper in America. Consider lines from Section 7 that call the black man "the start of populous states and rich republics" (ISBE 7. 18). However, upon closer examination, one clearly witnesses Whitman's opinion that evolutionary theory, in this case, supports theories of the vanishing minority races.

In this theory of vanishing races, most commonly associated with the Vanishing Indian, minorities cannot prosper under the force of natural selection. The fittest species always crushes

³ Darwin, Charles. "Charles Darwin, 'On the Races of Man,' from *The Descent of Man*" Ed. Robert Bernasconi and Tommy Lee Lott. *The Idea of Race*. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub., 2000. 54-78. Print. In "On the Races of Man," from *The Decent of Man*, Darwin writes, "Thus with mankind the offspring of distinct races resemble in all respects the offspring of true species and of varieties. This is shown for instance, by the manner in which the characters of both parents are blended, and by one form absorbing another through repeated crosses. In this latter case the progeny both of crossed species and varieties retain for a long period a tendency to revert to their ancestors, especially to that one which is prepotent in transmission" (On the Races, 1871). Here, Darwin succinctly shows the long generational crossing necessary to result in one individual and his or her unique appearance.

weaker species, and eventually, weaker species vanish into memory. Whitman was well versed in the rhetoric of vanishing races, for he worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs in New York in 1865. In Whitman's 1892 notes on his experiences in the Bureau, he bemoans the impending loss of aboriginal people in America.⁴ Most notably, eighteenth century theorists, like G.W.F. Hegel⁵ and Immanuel Kant, point to what they perceived as weakness, or as Kant states, "a half-extinguished life power," as evidence for the imminent disappearance of Native people (Kant 17). These theorists heralded the trope of vanishing races and reinforced its power as a dominant Western conviction and a lens through which to examine minorities in the United States.

Thus, Whitman recalls the Vanishing Indian to understand one possible future of blacks in America. In fact, in "Whitman and American Indians," Folsom shows how Whitman conflated theories of Native Americans with depictions of African Americans in both his poetry and notebooks or prose works. To support this, Folsom examines examples of Whitman's vanishing Indian. In "The Sleepers," the Squaw Woman vanishes into a distant memory that Whitman's mother recalls. The Native woman acts as a representative for the doomed future of American's indigenous populations.

The more she [Whitman's mother] look'd upon her she loved her,

⁴ In "An Indian Bureau Reminiscence" in *Prose Works*, Whitman details his experiences in diplomatic sessions at the Bureau. He admits the unique characteristics of the aboriginal people he encounters will likely not be carried into America's future, saying, "There is something about these aboriginal Americans, in their highest characteristic representations, essential traits, and the ensemble of their physique and physiognomy—something very remote, very lofty, arousing comparisons with our own civilized ideals—something that our literature, portrait painting, etc., have never caught, and that will almost certainly never be transmitted to the future, even as a reminiscence."

⁵ Hegel, G.W.F. "G.W.F. Hegel, 'Anthropology,' from the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*." Ed. Robert Bernasconi and Tommy Lee Lott. *The Idea of Race*. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub., 2000. 38-44. Print. In "Anthropology," from the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Science*, Hegel surveys the world's races. When he discusses Native Americans, he writes, "But finally, with regard to the original inhabitants of America, we have to remark that they are a vanishing, feeble race. It is true that in some parts of America at the time of its discovery, a pretty considerable civilization was to be found; this, however, was not comparable with European culture and disappeared with the original inhabitants" (Hegel 43).

Never before had she seen such wonderful beauty and purity,

/.../

The red squaw staid all the forenoon, and toward the idle of the afternoon she went
away,

The poem's preoccupation with describing the woman's beauty and personality simply falls off after the Native woman "went away." Abruptly, that section of the poem ends,

O my mother was loth to have her go away,

All the week she thought of her, she watch'd for her many a month,

She remember'd her many a winter and many a summer,

But the red squaw never came nor was heard of there again. ("Sleepers" 6.14-17)

In the poem, the speaker's mother longs for a clearer understanding of the Native woman's story, but the squaw woman fades away in his mother's own dream-like memory.

Many citizens believed America would benefit from the erasure of Native Americans altogether. This notion was most prominent among those who experienced or read accounts of tribes' violent defense of their land against encroaching frontiersmen. To enforce the idea that tribes were powerless, popular exhibits, film, literature, and other public displays erased American Indians from contemporary America, keeping the Native confined to museums of natural history and historical accounts. In *Indians in Unexpected Places*, Philip J. Deloria tracks the theories that influenced the ways Americans represented Indians throughout the nineteenth century. Deloria shows that early films about Natives often borrowed storylines from nineteenth century novels, such as Lydia Maria Child's *Hobomok*, Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie*, and James Fenimore Cooper's *Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish* (Deloria 96). In the chapter,

“Representations: Indian War, and the Movie,” Deloria shows the American tendency to bemoan the “loss” of Native tribes by capturing their ancient nobility in spectacles on stages, in museums, and in the pages of contemporaneous literature. Using tribesmen as actors to reenact the battle of Wounded Knee, Buffalo Bill and other producers famously claimed audiences were afforded a unique opportunity to view Native culture before it completely vanished from America’s cultural tapestry. Bill claimed his actors were the last survivors of a dying race, and because these spectacles showed mass slaughters of tribes at the hand of Custer and his men, the vanishing Indian trope grew in clout over nineteenth century thinkers.

In the same way, Whitman’s man at auction is also a spectacle—placed before an audience to be observed in detail. The man’s flesh is invaded by the gaze of an audience who looks deeply beyond the surface of his skin. As in many of Whitman’s other poems, especially in Section 7 of “I Sing the Body Electric,” the poet asks readers to tactilely experience his depiction while lingering over the leaves. Readers are supplied with the tools to strip the man’s skin, to probe and pluck, to enter his veins and examine his very blood. Just as audiences of Wild West shows gazed at violence against Native Americans, a racial other, Whitman calls his readers to examine and participate in violence against this man. In this scheme, violence and reenactments of that violence, are justified by the notion that the subject is one of the last living examples of a vanishing race. This violence becomes a way to weaken minorities while simultaneously enforcing the notion that ethnic bodies eventually weaken under the duress of a dominant culture and will eventually disappear from American identity.

To illustrate Whitman’s association of the Vanishing Indian with the future of black slaves, Folsom identifies a passage in Horace Traubel’s, *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, a compilation of correspondence and conversation between Whitman and Traubel. On September 18, 1888 the poet layers the vanishing Indian trope atop his discussion of African Americans who

“will be eliminated” slowly over time. Folsom effectively shows Whitman’s oscillation between theories in the passage below:

‘The nigger like the Injun, will be eliminated: it is the law of races, history, what-not: always so afar inexorable—always to be. Someone proves that a superior grade of rats comes and then all the minor rats are clear out’ (When Horace Traubel hears Whitman say this, he tells the poet, ‘That sounds like Darwin,’ and Whitman replies, ‘Does it? It sounds like me, too’ (Folsom 89).

This quotation certainly helps to suggest Whitman’s subscription to multiple theories of the evolutionary racial formation. It also shows Whitman’s ability to contain multiple, seemingly incongruent, ideas within one passage. According to Folsom, Darwinism was a major influence for Whitman’s theories of racial erasure. The poet uses terms like “the law of races” and “inexorable” to suggest minority races would eventually vanish from America’s landscape⁶. Whitman believed the naturally fittest race was divinely destined to rise in dominance in America. And in white dominance, minorities of America were doomed to vanish from the landscape.

Whitman is so struck by Darwin’s theories of evolution and the dominance of some species over others that he writes in his 1859 notebooks that evolutionary theory is part of a discourse about “those claims to [human] origin.” For Whitman, Darwin’s evolutionary theory

⁶ In the nineteenth century, the theory of the vanishing Indian was not only misguided, but its rhetoric was also used for quite demeaning purposes. The idea sought to eliminate the Native American from both physical and mental spaces of white America, ultimately placing the group entirely in the country’s ancient past. According to the Blood Quantum system⁶ as well as Darwin’s theories of racial extinction, the discrete erasure of an entire culture was accomplished through intermixing between minorities and whites. These notions shaped early American ideas of Indian racial formation, and Indian identity became formally qualified through the Blood Quantum System, which the government implemented in order to track the biological extinction and cultural degradation of the race. This system of fractions was primarily concerned with perceived Native barbarism, and the fractions worked to determined how savage a Native person was. If full blood, the Indian was considered more savage than if only a fraction.

affirms the poet's understanding of human ancestry—that homo-sapiens develop and change over time in both culture and physical appearance. And as such, ethnic categories and definitions will also evolve over time through natural selection, amalgamation of mixed races, and the eventual disappearance of some races. Later, in his 1892 notes, "Darwinism—(then Furthermore)," Whitman posits that modern poets and priests should grapple with Darwin's theories of natural selection and evolution. He writes

But in current and latest times, the theory of human origin that seems to have most made its mark, (curiously reversing the antique,) is that we have come on, originated, develop, from monkeys, baboons—...

Whitman urges society's torchbearers—politicians, public intellectuals, as well as religious leaders—to contain multitudes as he does, entertaining the veracity of all people's beliefs and practices. These thinkers should absorb Darwin's theory into their own ancient understandings of human origins—allowing scientific discovery to influence, and not oppose, religious faith or historical knowledge. Later in the notes he speculates,

In due time the Evolution theory will have to abate its vehemence, cannot be allow'd to dominate everything else, and will have to take its place as a segment of the circle, the cluster—as but one of many theories, many thoughts, of profoundest value—and re-adjusting and differentiating much, yet leaving the divine secrets just as inexplicable and unreachable as before—may-be more so.

As such, Whitman holds to his tendency to entertain popular theories of the nineteenth century no matter how contradicting. He sees value in and accepts them all, even those that may vehemently oppose each other. It is no surprise, then, that the poet allows for Darwin's evolutionary theory to inform his understanding of the black man's future in America.

Continuing his poem in the biological rhetoric he adopts from Darwin's observations, the poet describes the man's blood, which is "the same old blood! The same red-running blood!" as if to establish similarities between the auction audience, the readers, and the man.⁷ By examining the man's blood, Whitman shows this vital substance is not subject to racial designation. Instead, blood runs sticky, red regardless of who bleeds it. Whitman couples in the same stanza this life-giving substance with human desires, which are universal signs of human life. The poet writes, "There swells and jets a heart, there all passions desires, reaching's, aspirations: / Do you think they are not there because they are not expressed in parlors and lecture rooms?" (ISBE, 7.17-18). Whitman distinguishes between aspirations and ideas expressed in parlors, which refers to intellectual and politically driven discourse among white American society in comparison with ideas that are expressed in humbler rooms.

This rhetorical question directed to the auction audience reinforces the man's segregation from academic and political spheres. While the poet-auctioneer speaks, lecturing the audience on the black man's beauty, the man is the object of the crowd's gaze and thereby an objectified other, distanced from contributing to the public intellectual sphere. As such, the man is a representative for all marginalized peoples—whether African American, Native American or from the laboring class. Whitman suggests that the man has been excluded from America's public intellectual and political social scene—parlors and lecture rooms—and indicates what Betsy Erkkila calls Whitman's growing fear of "dismemberment," or the lack of unity between major ethnic and social groups in the United States (Erkkila 132). To illustrate this point, Erkkila cites Whitman's letter of praise to Emerson, which acts as a sort of epigraph to the 1856 *Leaves of Grass*. In it, Whitman sets out to define his role as poet, but continually slips in and out of using political language, as if poetry has the ability to address and affect political progress. Erkkila

⁷ Also, consider Acts 17:36, which reads, "And [God] hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;" (KJV)

shows that Whitman believes his role as an American poet is to stir citizens to unify the segmented parts of the nation's metaphorical body. She emphasizes that antebellum editions of *Leaves of Grass*, specifically the 1856 edition, best show Whitman's uneasiness with the prospects of a divided nation. In response to the potentially divided nation, Whitman writes Section 7 to show the appeal of a socially, racially, and politically unified America. He presents the black man's physical body, whole, perfect in function and value, in spite of Whitman's fear of the Nation's dismemberment.

Though Whitman fears dismemberment, as proposed by Erkkila, the poet's image of the man at auction illustrates a rather graphic removal of skin, a segmentation of the man's physical form, and an erasure of his ethnic and cultural identity. By declaring the black man's equality and simultaneously showing the man's body in segments, Whitman contradicts himself. He both exalts the man's black skin and then removes it. He shows the absurdity of selling bodies at auction and then he participates in the very thing he disapproves of. As such, Whitman engages in violence of against the man's body, yet his intentions are not to humiliate the man, but rather to show blacks are a spectacle and are subject to the dominant violence of the white audience. Here, the black man is not given a voice to either allow or deny the auction's proceedings, and he is not given a choice to escape the objectifying gaze of Whitman and his audience. On the auction block, the black man is weakened by the dominance of white society, but Whitman would like to speculate concerning the man's future after he is removed from the auction. Thus, the poem's end is shrouded in rhetorical questions. It is as if, for Whitman, America's future is clouded with what Erkkila calls "anxiety about the effect of black liberation on the future of America. The black person's 'hardly human' future is 'blear'—something indistinct, dim, and out of focus in Whitman's vision of America" (Erkkila 242). The post Emancipation question may have read, "How can the United States allow citizenship and political rights to a group who was once considered non-human?" Rather than echo this concern, Whitman transcends his own oppressive

culture by posing questions that assume personhood, citizenship and democratic equality are all inalienable rights for the ex-slave. As such, Whitman plays with more positive theories of black identity in America:

This is not only one man, this is the father of those who shall be fathers in their

turns,

In him the start of populous states and rich republics,

Of him countless immortal lives with countless embodiments and enjoyments.

(ISBE 7.19-21)

For Whitman, the future of blacks in America is favorable. These freed slaves will be the “start of populous states and rich republics.” The auctioneer-poet encourage his audience at auction, as well as readers to consider their own genealogy, suggesting they may be the descendants of someone like the man Whitman describes, only generations removed from inhuman offenses, captivity and commoditization, against their family.

Yet, by eliminating indicators of the man’s ethnicity, Whitman simultaneously imagines the future of a race that evolves and disappears, over time. Whitman looks far beyond the man’s body, and imagines that through a similar system of fractions as is supported by the vanishing Indian trope, the man’s racial identity could also be diluted. Whitman presumes that blacks will vanish after several generations that have been intermixed with the dominant white race. Under the lens of the Vanishing Indian theory and Darwin’s evolution, the mixed race gives way to a new American race that will perhaps look similar to the fitter white race, which causes him to pose the question:

How do you know who shall come from the offspring of his offspring through he

centuries?

(Who might you find you have come from yourself, if you could trace back through
the centuries?) (ISBE 7.19-20)

Audiences of this auction, and presumably contemporaneous readers of *Leaves of Grass* were not African Americans.⁸ Still, many American readers were likely connected to the slave trade in one way or another. Whitman's 1855 readership would have relied on slavery as a significant economic foundation, and slavery's commercial effects were undeniably integrated into public spaces. Simultaneously, one can picture the expansive imagination necessary for Whitman's white audience to envision themselves as equal to the slave they have come to domestically buy and sell. Yet, by posing the final interrogative and then rephrasing and reposing the question, Whitman does not allow his auction audience or his reader to avoid answering the question. Instead, he insists that his white audience imagines that through the evolution of species, they too might trace back their lineage to a marginalized and degraded figure, like the man on the auction block.

Whitman closes this section with a series of rhetorical questions, which illustrate the poet's propensity to "re-examine" everything he knows. Whitman's impulse to question his knowledge is shown in a rousing manifesto for readers of the 1855 "Preface" to *Leaves of Grass*. In it, he encourages readers to consider equality between all people a fundamental reality, and therefore to consider this equality as reason to celebrate each body and soul that inhabits the Earth.

⁸ Klammer, Martin. *Whitman, Slavery, and the Emergence of Leaves of Grass*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995. Print. In fact, Klammer's book shows that blacks were not interested in Whitman's work until the Harlem Renaissance when Langston Hughes encourages "Negros should read and remember" in 1953.

This is what you shall do: Love the earth and sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to every one that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labor to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God, have patience and indulgence toward the people, take off your hat to nothing known or unknown or to any man or number of men, go freely with powerful uneducated persons and with the young and with the mothers of families, read these leaves in the open air every season of every year of your life, re-examine all you have been told at school or church or in any book, dismiss whatever insults your own soul; and your very flesh shall be a great poem and have the richest fluency not only in its words but in the silent lines of its lips and face and between the lashes of your eyes and in every motion and joint of your body. . . . (LOG 11).

Whitman imagines that by rallying his readers to live in this spirit, he and his readers can transcend their bodies as mere physical beings and be raised to poetic expressions of the flesh—recognizing the divine unity of body and soul. This transcendence, then, becomes worthy of another’s pause, examination, and thorough reading. Yet, the poem-making that readers are asked to participate in also acknowledges “silent lines of [the body’s] lips and face.” These silent lines represent spaces between lines in poetry where there lingers doubt or unanswerable questions, which no “school or church or . . . any book” could solve. An example of these silent lines are illustrated at the end of Section 7 of “I Sing the Body Electric.” Through them, Whitman concludes the Section without resolving his initial problem—to imagine the future of minority races in America. He is puzzled, and thereby ends the Section, leaving the man’s body and implications of his lineage to be silently pondered by his readers.

Yet, in “I Sing the Body Electric,” Whitman continues his illustrations of minority races in America altogether. I find Section 8 particularly interesting as an example of Whitman’s perpetually conflicted attempts to affirm the minority’s equality in America and simultaneously catalogue and preserve the dark bodies that he believes will eventually disappear. After

examining and picking apart the man at auction, Whitman chooses to illustrate another black person in Section 8; this time, he depicts a black woman. Whitman values the woman for her uterus and biologically life-sustaining abilities. The poet encourages his auction audience and readers to examine the woman who represents, “not only herself,” but also the prospects of future black generations. He calls her the “teeming mother of mothers,” and the “bearer of them that shall grow and be mates to the mothers” (ISBE 8.2-3). Thus, the poem depicting this black woman seems to abandon Whitman’s growing conviction that dark bodies could eventually disappear under the duress of a manifestly formidable America.

This Section further illustrates the uncertainty with which Whitman imagines the future of minorities in America. His unanswerable question illustrates what Whitman might consider a “silent line.” In Section 7 he poses the troubling question: “Who might you find you have come from yourself?” After the silent space of pondering between sections, Whitman answers, “A woman’s body at auction” (ISBE 8.1). Thus, across the blank space between Sections 7 and 8, the poet plays with yet another possible answer to his question of the future of minorities in America. This new possibility, which shows a prosperous and limitless black race, directly challenges the bleak answers he illustrated in the previous section. From line to line and section to section in “I Sing the Body Electric,” Whitman oscillates between possible theories that inform his unstable forecast of the future of blacks in America. Despite his damning view of the future of minorities in Section 7, Whitman’s body of work never wavers to reinforce that all humans are equally gifted with beautiful bodies, which are divinely connected to their souls. Thereby, men and women of varying classes, regions, and races must be politically acknowledged as equal citizens and must be treated with due respect.

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APPENDENCIES

APIS MELLIFERA IN PANDEMONIUM AND IN YOUR EAR:

JOHN MILTON'S COMPLICATED VERSION OF THE TRADITIONAL BEE SIMILE

The mystery of the bee has been a source of intellectual conversation since the time of the ancients. Beginning with the earliest scientific discoveries, scientists in 400 BC began hypothesizing about the social order of the bee kingdom. They ruminated on the bees' ability to create the sticky, sweet liquid that humans traded as currency, offered as medicine, and enjoyed as a delicacy. In his epic poem, *Paradise Lost*, John Milton is faced with the challenge of incorporating traditional bee imagery in order to honor the literary tradition he acknowledges throughout his epic. He may either choose to emphasize only one of the multiplicitous implications a bee can bear, or he may choose to altogether reconstruct the simile's meaning. In a true stroke of genius, Milton chooses the latter. He duplicates the epic poetry tradition that employs the bee as a simile for contemporary society. Yet, he complicates the bee's metaphorical value as he uses its imagery throughout his epic, slightly changing and adding to its meaning each time the image occurs.

To value the departure Milton takes from traditional interpretations of the bee, one must first understand contemporary society's bee metaphor. In one of the earliest botany studies, Ariston and Philiscus observe the life cycle of the bee, but report incomprehensive work.

They concluded the bee was one of the world's wonders, the very picture of modern human hierarchy, and an example of a hard-working and productive social order. Yet, their discoveries did not take into account the drone bee's lack of a stinger or the monarch bee as female. Though incomplete, their study fueled many popular culture references to the bee, such as King Louis XII's affinity for bees. During his reign, between 1462 and 1515, he claimed the bee as his personal insignia, and in doing so, outfitted his palace with the likeness of the bee—on crests, seals, and official documents. Because of the beehive's resemblance to the contemporary ideal social order, where both male and female have very specific tasks and all are under the jurisdiction of the monarch bee, the metaphor gained a great deal of popularity in the centuries to follow.

Much of this fascination is preserved by the Father of English Beekeeping, Charles Butler's musings about the bee, saying, "the work : and fruit of the little Bee is so great and wonderful, so comely for order and beauty, so excellent for Art and wisdom, & so full of pleasure and profit; that the contemplation thereof may well besee me and ingenious nature" (Butler 3-4). Later he says, "'Of all the insects the Bees are chiefe, and worthy to be most admired; being the only things of that kind which are bred for the behoofe of men" (Butler 3). Yet, Butler's studies of the apiary extended further than Ariston and Philiscus's observations, and his working, leading up to 1623, provided new hypotheses about the bee that John Milton would have been remiss to ignore.

Prior to Milton, literary references to the bee were widespread throughout western antiquity. In Polleichtner's observation of the bee in antiquity, he asserts, "the common denominator...in deciding to use the bee in similes was the possibility to advance the narrative in a twofold way: It could serve to describe the present, and to foreshadow the future of a certain situation within the broader context of the epic poem at the same time" (Polleichtner 1). For this reason, both Homer and Virgil's epics use the bee image to indicate a shift in the epic hero's

location. The narrators observe a civilization that is new, and they marvel at its ability to function and grow in prosperity without major flaws or difficulty. The beehive, then, stands as a metaphor for such a society. In Milton's epic, the narrator often describes the bees as they *swarm* about the hive—an image that carries negative connotations with it. When a hive begins to swarm, it is in upheaval as a change in leadership occurs. Part of the hive often relocates and rebuilds under the reign of a new monarch. Even biblical references to swarming insects “appear as metaphors for troubles or for enemy armies throughout the Old Testament, and Solomon omits the bee in his praise of small creatures in Proverbs 6.6 and 30.25” (Edwards 219).

Milton conflates interpretations of the bee simile, but he must first acknowledge the prior contemporary interpretations of the bee; then, he provides new connotations with which readers can understand his bee simile. In *Paradise Lost*, bees consistently appear in either a swarm or a single bee in flight; its presence conveys activity and productivity. In its first and most explicit appearance in *Paradise Lost* in Book 1, Satan and the fallen angels build Pandemonium, which the epic narrator says resembles a beehive. Mammon, who is known for his rich appreciation of aesthetics, governs the materials that will make hell a marvelous spectacle. The narrator indicates Mammon's haughty attitude towards his surroundings. He prefers the most treasured materials, saying that even in heaven before his fall, “his looks and thoughts / Were always downward bent, admiring more / The riches of Heav'ns pavement, trod'n Gold” (1.680-682). Mammon's discontentment with heavenly materials—which even God is satisfied to surround himself with—is evidence of his greed and perhaps reason for his fallen state.

The narrator's discussion of Mammon continues with mention of having “holy else enjoy'd / In vision beatific” (1.683-684). In early Christian tradition, this beatific vision is defined as a vision given by God that allows the viewer to experience God face to face. Mammon's vision allowed him to gaze on the characteristics of God, which readers could infer are most extravagant and rich. Attracted to this beauty, Mammon perversely admires gold instead of God; riches

instead of righteousness. His infatuation for what is rich and beautiful about God becomes and infatuation for what is merely reflective of God's richness. Readers may also hear the similar sounds between the word 'beatific' and the word 'bee.' By deliberately employing the sounds of both words, the narrator forecasts his opinion about bees in antiquity. He frames his discussion of bees with this story of Mammon's perverse awe. Undoubtedly, men in antiquity gazed at the beehive in wonder; and instead of appreciating it for its unique and individual beauty, they greedily attempt to recreate its structure in contemporary society.

Scholars often consider the beehive to have directly influenced the structure of many Roman Catholic cathedrals. The domed ceilings, golden hues, and cell-like enclosures where clergy are situated, all draw inspiration from the hive. In fact, Rosenblatt's study of the bee metaphor suggests Pandemonium directly parallels St. Peter's Cathedral, and being situated in hell, indicates Milton's opposition to the Roman Catholic Church. Certainly, the epic narrator warns readers, "Let none admire / That riches grow in Hell" (1.690-691). His warning extends to the readers' admiration of both the beehive and Pandemonium—their efficiencies and worldly beauty. Later, the narrator will call the beehive "The suburb of their Straw-built Cittadel" (1.773). The 'citadel,' defined as a city with economic power, alludes to a variety of biblical passages where cities are built on unsound foundations. Yet many scholars point to 1 Corinthians 3:12-15, where the apostle suggests structures of all kinds will one day be tested by fire. The city that withstands such a test will reflect well on its builder. It is irrefutable that flames would immediately consume any citadel built with highly flammable materials, such as straw. Therefore, the reader is alerted of the hive's false beauty, as it only resides on the surface and cannot be sustained when appraised by trial.

The narrator continues, inserting the tower of Babel image, saying, "Learn how thier greatest Monuments of Fame, / And Strength and Art are easily out-done / By Spirits reprobate" (695-697). He points to human tendencies to consistently produce a new monument of their

greatness. This reinforces the fallen reader's natural inclination to stand in awe of well built and aesthetically pleasing structures. When in this awe-struck position, one may become like Mammon—so affected by beauty and productivity that he can no longer find pleasure in its source.

If Satan and his fallen angels are the bees, then some scholars have asked which character in *Paradise Lost* plays the role of beekeeper. In the narrator's description of the beehive in Pandemonium, he mentions that the hive has been "New rub'd with Baum" (1.774). This description indicates a beekeeper has rubbed the outsides of the hive with a balm, which is a mixture of the remnants from the bee's own wax, in order to coax the swarming bees to settle in their hive. In an apiary, the likelihood of losing a colony is high during the swarming season, considering the bees' instinct to swarm is coupled with their instinct to leave the hive and establish a new one under a new monarch. Rosenblatt indicates this balming is a sort of anointing of the hive; and this action would confer divine office on the fallen angels. Rosenblatt suggests God is the beekeeper—allowing and even anointing the new order in Pandemonium.

However, some may consider a combination of the narrator and the reader to act as beekeeper. In fact, as the observers of this scene, our sustained gaze on the details of the hive's appearance and its function approves it by way of our attention and interest. Likewise, the narrator's detailed description does the same. Some readers would never intentionally ordain the office of Satan. Yet, the process of inviting and welcoming Pandemonium's materialization is encouraged by nature of the hive's size. Because the fallen angels have been diminished to the size of creatures that humans can easily swat from the air, their evilness and the disposition of their fallen state has also been diminished. Rosenblatt's study concludes, "miniaturization can promote both a sense of distance and a habit of calm observation. Viewing the devils' construction work as analogous to the activity of bees, we become "Bee-masters," watching from

‘behind the stoole,’ or perhaps by the light of the ‘lanthorn hive’ described by Pliny” in his early research of beehive culture (Rosenblatt 614).

In Mary Baine Cambell’s explication of Milton’s bee metaphor, she agrees with Rosenblatt, but further explores the problem of curiosity as it relates to Milton’s bees. She says the 16th century “was a period in which the ‘curious’ was still for many solidly aligned with the monstrous and demonic — as an epistemological failure of virtue, especially political virtue” (Cambell 636). It was the tendency in the 16th century to zoom in on what was small in order to placate curiosity and urgency for learning. In botanist’s studies of the beehive, illustrations often accompanied. They were enlarged versions of a microscopic reality, and aficionados savored every opportunity to become familiar with a world much smaller than their own. To look deeply into the details of any organism was a new impulse and trend of the century. However, Milton slaps the writs of those too curious by making Pandemonium the very object the reader microscopically views. Milton makes it plain there can often be unknown danger lurking in small places of curiosity.

Though readers are asked to pause and look long on the nature and function of the hive, it is doubtless to say that most readers of this simile would know “there is the possibility of being stung by bees—the closer one gets to the beehive, the greater the danger and the number of bees which can be involved in the attack. On its surface the picture is one of peace. Yet the potential of the bees making use of their weapons in case of an attack is implicitly included in the passage” (Polleichter 6). Therefore, readers must cautiously approach the hive, taking note of its nuances, but also recognizing it as a symbol specifically employed to mesmerize and coax the reader to a reception of Satan and his action throughout the remainder of the epic. Yet, unintentionally becoming like Mammon, many readers will blindly follow the instruction of the narrator and will

“Behold a wonder! they but now who seemed / In bigness to surpass Earths Giant Sons” (1.777-778). And they will gaze, awe-struck, stilled by the overwhelming hum.

The chief architect, Mulciber, who is also a fallen angel and is credited for building heaven, has created “many... boyling cells,” (1.706) saturated with “veins of liquid fire,” (1.701), which resembles the liquid honey that fills the waxen cells of a beehive. The narrator continues drawing his detailed image of Pandemonium incorporating a multi-sensory experience of the setting. Moving from sight to sound, he describes the busy buzz of the hive: “Anon out of the earth a Fabrick huge / Rose like an Exhalation, with the sound / Of Dulcet Symphonies and voices sweet” (1.710-712). Using the term, ‘exhalations’ of sound, closely connects to the angel’s ‘exaltations’ of God, as are thoroughly described in Book 3 after Satan and the other angles fall: “The multitude of Angels with a shout / Loud as from numbers without number, sweet / As from blest voices, uttering joy, Heav’n rung” (3.345-347). Though Milton would like his readers to draw a connection between the two sounds of the words ‘exhalation’ and ‘exaltation’, he intends for the images to be in contrast with one another. In Pandemonium, the bee’s exhalations are not in response to the might of their leader like the exaltations of God the heavenly angles raise; rather, they exhale in response to their exasperated efforts to make their hive ready.

Finally, the narrator uses the bee simile as it is most often referenced in epic tradition—to discuss the value of rigid social structure within society. Milton would be remiss to ignore the epic poems from which this bee simile originates. Therefore, readers of the simile will do well to understand the bee in the larger context of its epic tradition. In Virgil’s epic poem, Aeneas has left his home and seeks a new country, which he is fated to lead. Along the way, his mother, Venus, guides him. In Book 1, Venus covers him in a cloud so that he may observe the prosperity of Carthage, a city that has been newly inhabited by the Tyrian race after they fled their country of origin. By fixing his eye on Carthage, he is filled with hope that his wayfaring will soon end in Rome with as much contentment and prosperity as the Tyrians have found in Carthage. “As

Aeneas watched, they made laws, chose officials / Installed a senate. Some were dredging / The harbor, others laying the foundation” (Virgil 1.523-525). Following this general statement about the city’s vitality, the epic narrator begins constructing the bee simile. First, the narrator places the hive within a season, “under an early summer sun,” which indicates the hive’s healthiest season for survival and productivity (Virgil 1.528). Apologically, this is also the season that is best for transporting bees, meaning they will form swarming patterns and will go about their busiest work, following a new monarch as it leads “a new swarm out to the wildflowers, / Or stuffing honey into the comb, / Swelling the cells with nectar” (Virgil, 1.529-531). This productivity mesmerizes the epic narrator, Aeneas, and even the reader, showing the ability for a society to work in concert for the benefit of each individual.

Finally, he says, “The busy hive seethes with all their activity” (Virgil 1.534). The word ‘seethe,’ as was defined in the 17th century, suggests an inner turmoil. Perhaps the epic narrator recognizes the same ‘exhalation’ Milton’s bees experience, as the hive is made busy with their task. Yet, it seems this hive’s angst while engaging in good, hard labor is the product of worthy discipline. And their reward is the sweet, “fragrant honey... redolent to thyme (Virgil 1.528-535). Though, Milton also references the fragrance of the hive. Virgil’s hive produces a sweetness that is associated with a religious sacrificial ceremony, as is indicated by the language, “redolent to thyme.” Thyme is the herb many catholic churches would have used during services, and contemporary readers would easily associate this hive with a level of holiness.

And yet, Virgil leaves room for doubt in this particular society of bees by mentioning the need to ward “off the worthless brood of drones” (Virgil 1.533). The narrator suggests the possibility of laziness among the bee order. Though this particular hive wards off laziness, Milton’s hive is guilty of idleness. The “absence of any reference to honey hints that the metaphoric bees in *Book I* [of *Paradise Lost*] are unproductive” (Edwards 224). In fact, the only

bee that does not produce honey in any given hive is the drone bee. In his manuscript, *The Female Monarchie*, Charles Butler observes:

The Drone, which is a grosse Hive Bee without sting, hath been alwaies reputed a greedy lozell, {and therefore hee that is quicke at meat and flow at worke is fitted with this title} for howsoever he brave it with his round velvet cap, his side gowne, his full parah, and his lowd voice; yet is he but an idle companion, living by the sweat of others brows. Fro hee worketh not at all, either at home or abroad, and yet spendeth as much as two laborers : you shall never find his maw without a good drop of the purest nectar. In the heat of the day he flieth abroad, aloft, and about, and that with no small noise, as though he would do some great act : but it is onely for his pleasure, and to get him a stomach, and then returns he presently to his cheere.... (Butler C.4).

Because Milton's narrator does not mention the production of honey in his hive, he indirectly has described a hive full of drones like those Butler observed, whose "flying "to and fro" is apparently a function of pleasure rather than labor" (Edwards 224). Therefore, readers may only consider Milton's satanic bees as distortions of the common apiarian simile, which implies bees are hardworking and prosperous insects.

Virgil's is not the only epic poem that Milton draws this bee tradition from. In Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, the bee simile appears as an image for Heaven. Again, the bees swarm in a bustle of labor around the sweet nectar of a white rose. This rose is meant to symbolize the trinity, and the bees, symbolizing angels in heaven, drink from their reward. In a blatant rejection of the traditionally good, hard working, and even holy bee image, Milton's narrator describes bees that represent Satan and other fallen angels; they are the very antithesis of holiness. They appear in a thick swarm, "both on the ground and in the air" (1.767). Milton's swarm seems to be the most aggressive of the three epic poems. If Milton were intending to create a bee-image that fondly

reflected hell—like Virgil’s praise of Carthage and Dante’s complement of heaven—he might have chosen a different activity for the bees to engage in his image. In a swarm, a new reigning monarch bee has just been chosen, and both worker and drone bees are given the choice to either stay in the old order or fly out of the hive to follow the new leader. The swarm occurs as a large number of bees choose to follow the new leader. In the text, Milton’s fallen angels follow the new leadership of Satan, and they create a swarm about their newly constructed hive, which is “brusht with the hiss of ruffling wings” (1.768).

To parallel Dante’s simile, Milton’s narrator provides an image of the bees as they “Pour forth their populous youth above the Hive / In clusters; they among fresh dews and flowers” (1.770-771). These bees naturally gravitate to the ambrosial fragrance of the flower and attack it for its nectar. The epic narrator will draw parallels between this particular image of Pandemonium and Satan’s first secret encounters with Eve in Book 4, in which he perched by her ear as she slept and filled her dreams with the images he spoke. The following morning, Adam wonders at his good fortune to have such a beautiful woman sleeping beside him, and in his whispered speech, so not to wake his wife, he extols her beauty with, “How Nature paints her colors, how the Bee / Sits on the Bloom extracting liquid sweet” (5.24-25). With the mention of the bee, Eve is immediately shaken from her slumber. Unbeknownst to Adam, he has described the very scene in which Satan first attempts beguiling Eve. In fact, Satan was found by the guardian angels, Ithuriel and Zephon, “Squat like a Toad, close at the eare of Eve; / Assaying by his Devilish art to reach / The Organs of her Fancie, and with them forge / Illusions as he list (4.799-803). From then on, it is Satan strategy to perch on the ear of his enemy, like a drone bee relentlessly pursuing the nectar of an innocent flower.

Images of bees perching at the ear of a listener are far subtler throughout Milton’s epic than the first bee image Milton provides in Book 1. In fact, very few scholars note the presence of bees in *Paradise Lost* after they most explicitly. Yet, with close examination, readers will find the

reoccurrence of images and phrases Milton uses to evoke his original bee metaphor. These include any references to swarming; any metaphor of Eve as a flower, who is the prey of a predator; and of course, any reference to a ringing or buzzing in a character's ear. After warning his audience of the pitfalls of assigning too much value to hell because of its beautiful construction, Milton's narrator describes in detail the structure of the hive-like Pandemonium, ironically allowing his readers to gaze in awe of its beauty. Next, Milton begins the conflation of his interpretation of bees by using the small insect as a metaphor for the vulnerable position both his characters and readers have with relation to curiosity or new knowledge .

When Eve wakes in Book 4, after Adam whispers of his delight in her, his flower, she is frightened, having a "startl'd eye / On Adam, whom embracing" she begins to describe her dream (5.26-27). She recalls being led by an unknown figure, and the dream effectively foreshadows her own temptation at the Tree of Interdicted Knowledge. By the manipulative words of Satan, filling her ear like the buzz of a drone bee as it hovers over its flower, she dreams of her own fall to Death. After tasting of the fruit, she recounts:

With him I flew, and underneath beheld

The Earth outstretcht immense, a prospect wide

And various: wondering at my flight and change

To this high exaltation; suddenly

My Guide was gon, and I, me thought sunk down, (5.87-91)

Describing the upward flight, through which she experiences "this high exaltation," Eve nearly precisely describes the sexual interaction between the queen bee and a drone as they mate. Their flight of ecstasy is quite violent, ultimately ending in the drone bee's death as he reaches the

climax of their mating. He plummets to his own end, and then the queen descends, impregnated to ensure the hives continued prosperity.

After Charles Butler's study of the bee, ancient ideas about the female bee's role in the hive began to shift. Before his publication in 1609, many believe the beehive is a direct example of male domination over female creatures, and the hive was often used to justify male superiority in society. However, Butler's study offers a new observation from which Milton draws notions of the bee's mating patterns to support the sexual nature of Eve's dream. Butler writes:

Nature hath armen no female for fight and force against the male ; but the Bees have power and weapon to chastice the Drones.... The weakness of which reason I marvail he did not see, seeing in all the kinde of Hawkes the female doth command the male, as being both stronger and better armed. Whereunto may bee added the example of the Amazons reigning in his time : who by force of arms subdued many Kingdomes of men, and held them in subjection. (Butler C. 4)

Milton and his counterparts would have been keenly aware of this nuance in nature. In fact, when Charles Butler first circulated his work entitled, *The Feminine Monarchie: Or the History of Bees*, in 1609, his instructions to English beekeepers on proper mastery of the skill were widely accepted. Much of his work discusses the bees' activity during particular seasons, and he makes suggestions of activity for the serious beekeeper through each astrological season. However, a great deal of his work is also devoted to the intricate social order of bee colonies. He is the first to consider what was once called the King Bee to be a female, calling her Queen Bee. Ultimately, Butler concedes that the social order of the beehive is a massive inversion of the social structure reflected in English society. He acknowledges that generally the male race has authority over females, yet in the case of the bees, he observes, "the Feminine gender is more worthy then the

Masculine.” (Butler C.4). Milton plays with the contemporary, and even uncommon, notions of gender rolls found in the beehive as he depicts the scenes following Eve’s fall.

Adam describes Eve as a flower, realizes she has taken of the forbidden fruit and is now a fallen creature. He asks, “How are thou lost, how on a sudden lost, / Deface’t, deflour’d, and now to Death devote?” (9. 900-901). Using the language of ‘deflour’d,’ Adam suggests a sexual manipulation was exchanged between Satan and Eve, and the repercussion of this is her death. Though Milton could have yielded to Butler’s contemporary findings of the bee—which undoubtedly complicated traditional notions of the bee metaphor—he chooses to maintain Eve’s traditional subservient female role.

Simultaneously, Milton must also account for Butler’s new findings that the hive is dominated by an inversion of the traditional hierarchy of genders. He must relinquish his epic poem to resemble the latest scientific discoveries regarding his simile, and in doing so, he continues to complicate his use of the metaphors. Therefore, in Raphael’s account of the creation story, Milton allows for a slight restructuring of gender roles. Raphael recounts a particular hierarchy of creation within the animal order. It seems there is no accident to the order in which the animals were created, and Milton would not lightly assign such a hierarchy. Also, he specifically describes some animals, those that it seems he feels are most important to the purpose of his epic.

He recalls God first made the “Tawny Lion” (7.464), then the tiger, horse, behemoth, and other large and powerful animals. They exhibit the most strength, and traditional images of the lion, for instance, suggest they are rulers of the animal kingdom. The hierarchy then continues with beasts of the sea, and they are followed by animals that creep on the ground, which included “some of Serpent kinde” (7.482); Raphael still has not indicated the creation of the Bees. The reader is then left to wonder, are bees the lowest form in the animal order? Finally, Raphael

juxtaposes the bee with the “Parsimonious Emmet, provident / of future” (7.485-486). Both the ant and the bee could be described as hardworking, frugal, and preparative for the future of the colony. Yet, Raphael slightly distinguishes the two orders, but considering the Emmet to have a particular “Pattern of just equality” (7.487) that the bee does not. The key word to note here is “just,” meaning righteous before God. The ant’s social order is perhaps much in place like the unfallen state of humanity—where the male concedes to God and the female concedes to her mate.

In the bee order, this structure of gender hierarchy is entirely inverted. Raphael calls this “her popular Tribes / Of Commonaltie,” suggesting the bee’s self-governing community, but also harkening the language of the Commonwealth, which Milton so emphatically calls for in his prose tracts. Like in the bee simile in Book 1, these newly created bees are swarming. Raphael goes on to catalogue “The Female Bee that feeds her Husband Drone / Deliciously” (7.490-491). After juxtaposing with the ant, it is interesting that Raphael would indicate the bee as specifically female. Her slothful husband, the drone bee, is fed at the fruit of her hands, and their lodgings are created and maintained by her labor. Here, the female bee is given the qualities of an effective and valuable creation of God. Therefore, Milton dodges all accusations of chauvinism by given the female bee agency and dominance over her husband. Interestingly, this will be the very inversion Adam and Eve will experience as Eve tempts Adam to partake in the forbidden fruit. Yet, Milton continues to layer the multiplicitous interpretations of the bee simile, never allowing it to act in the same way it did before in the text. When the reader finally reaches the scene in which Eve falls, the bee has supported Milton’s anti-perversion, anti-concupiscence, and anti-misogynist sentiments.

Now, the bee simile will finally act to illustrate the ease with which temptation and sin is a skillful predator. Readers may hope when Eve is faced with Satan’s temptation, she will mimic the upward flight of the queen bee, and prove Butler’s observation of the female bee’s prowess.

However, she succumbs to the power of a thought planted in her mind, which when given the opportunity to be weighed, is poorly handled.

According to his discussion on the nature of sin, in *De Doctrina Christiana*, Milton would also hope Eve would avoid the buzzing temptation in her ear. In fact, he asserts all sin is the product of two endeavors: first, sin begins as a perverse thought planted in the mind, and secondly, the thought is acted upon, solidifying its harm. He writes:

Both kinds of sin, as well that which is common to all, as that which is personal to each individual, consists of the two following parts, whether we term them gradations, or divisions, or modes of sin, or whether we consider them in the light of cause and effect; namely, evil concupiscence, or the desire of sinning, and the act of sin itself. (Milton 516)

And later he says, the act of sinning, sometimes referred to as the Actual Sin, which is the second part of sinning, “may be incurred, not only by actions commonly so called, but also by words and thoughts, and even by the omission of good actions” (Milton 517). Readers witness this scheme for sin as Milton depicts it in the falls of Satan, Eve, and Adam alike. Satan began to think himself on par with God, and acted in resistance to God’s sovereignty; therefore, he fell from heaven. Eve was encouraged to think on Satan’s claims to have positively experienced the effects of the forbidden fruit, and acting on it she falls. And Adam was encouraged to think he could not survive without remaining connected to his helpmeet. He acted on this perverse thought, and also fell away from favor in God. Readers may sense Milton uses these three examples of fallenness, especially Eve’s detailed fall, to illustrate the dangers of misguided reason when presented with new thoughts.

Milton’s epic narrator seems to be selective in his confidence of Eve, and he does not trust her ability to withstand the beguiling Satan’s words as they buzz in her ear. Though Eve presents initially strong reason against Satan’s perversion of her mind, she eventually allows the

tempter's words to make way "into the Heart" (9.550). As Satan presents his argument of an improved state of being after eating the forbidden fruit, he finally succeeds in tempting Eve.

After Eve's temptation in Eden in Book 9, the narrator bemoans,

Such ambush hid among sweet Flours and Shades

Waited with hellish rancour imminent

To intercept the way, or send the back

Despoiled of Innocence, of Faith, of Bliss (9.408-411).

Though the fallen narrator dramatizes the action, with phrases like "rancour imminent" and "despoiled of innocence" leading to the temptation, the image of the flower being preyed upon by a predator is recurring throughout the temptation scene. Eve finds herself, "Fixt on the Fruit she gaz'd, which to behold / Might tempt alone, and in her ears the sound / Yet rung of his perswaisive words, impregn'd / With Reason, to her seeming, and with Truth" (9.735-738).

Though the persuasive words of Satan only *seemed* true, they remain like a ringing in Eve's ear, which directly parallels the ringing she experienced after Satan whispered into her ear while she slept. Again, Milton suggests the origins of sin are found in the interworking of the mind, specifically when new thoughts are planted and poorly reasoned with.

Milton's bee simile becomes evermore complicated in nature, following the epic narrator's evocation of his muse in order to describe the events of The Fall in Book 9. Mingling similar images of the bee, he claims that moments of inspiration do not often come to him in the same way they would happen to epic narrators of his tradition. Instead, this narrator admits to being beguiled each night, as his muse visits him while he sleeps—much like Satan visited Eve, perched on her ear, buzzing ideas that strained her ability for right reasoning and effected her judgment when faced with temptation. Interestingly, the narrator's muse is a female, but has

many of the same bee-like characteristics that Satan was previously attributed with. The narrator describes, “Her nightly visitation unimplor’d, / And dictates to me slumbring, or inspires / Easie my unpremeditated Verse” (9.22-24). Here, the language is so very similar to the unimplored visitations Satan pays Eve as she sleeps in Book 4. Remember, Adam classified these visits as being like a bee extracting nectar from a flower, so readers can easily draw this parallel from Satan’s bee-like behavior to the muse’s bee-like behavior.

The reader must then consider whether an evil, satanic muse is leading the epic narrator. Yet, such a harsh conclusion cannot quite be drawn because until now, she has been trusted as the narrator’s guide throughout the story. Perhaps rather than classifying the muse as satanic, readers may consider her evidence of an active mind—able to create even in the midst of one’s slumber. Furthermore, in Milton’s conflation of the bee simile, he does not allow readers to associate the bee with evil. Therefore, Milton successfully addresses all of the contemporary interpretations of the bee simile but denies each claim in a separate episode in his epic.

First, he denies the traditional metaphor of the beehive as an image for proper social order. Next, he deconstructs the beehive as a metaphor for gender hierarchies. Finally, he offers a new way to read the bee simile—as a symbol for the transference of new information from one individual to another’s ear. This information may become trapped within the mind, buzzing about, and creating dreams while sleeping. It becomes the listener’s responsibility, then to process this new knowledge using the faculty of reason. Unfortunately, new knowledge may not always be processed with success. In fact, it is new information, embedded into her mind by the hum of the bee in her ear as she sleeps, that ultimately leads to Eve’s fall. In one scholar’s treatment of the bee simile, he suggests:

The fact that Adam speaks of the bee in the singular [when he wakes Eve from her startling dream] allows Milton to make a polemical point: as an individual creature, a

creature laboring outside the hive and extracting sweet liquid from flowers, the bee provides admirable pattern of how to learn from the natural world. (Edwards 225).

It is learning from the natural world, this 17th century trend for curiosity, that Milton both supports and remains skeptical of. He fears new knowledge could be misinterpreted, and in acting upon that corrupt faculty of the mind, a person's actions could lead to sinning. Aside from the epic narrator's discussion of the beehive, the other subtle bee similes suggest the bee functions as a means to distribute information. Considering Milton's value of individual agency, this new information must be appropriately examined and scrutinized—in spite of the bee's ability to mesmerize and leave a ringing in the ear. After all, Milton clearly asserts throughout his epic poem that humans are free to fall but capable of standing, and it seems the only chance Adam and Eve had to remain standing was through the right use of their reason.

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MOTHER OF MIND: GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION AS MOTHER IN JEAN
RHYS'S *WIDE SARGASSO SEA*

I. Introduction

In Jean Rhys's autobiography, *Smile Please*, she identifies a connection to her geographical location in the world that contributes to her development throughout adolescence. As Rhys is leaving Dominica, she notes, "[a]lready all my childhood, the West Indies, my father and mother had been left behind; I was forgetting them. They were the past" (*Smile Please*, 76). Later Rhys describes a feeling of displacement while living in England. "Going from room to room in this cold dark country, England, I never knew what it was that spurred me on and gave me an absolute certainty that there would be something else for me before long" (*Smile Please* 90). Like Rhys, the protagonist in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Antoinette, develops in the West Indies, specifically Jamaica in an estate called Coulibri. When she arrives in England, she experiences a similar displacement.

Rhys scholarship seems to neglect the failed bond between Antoinette and her mother country, England. Instead, many scholars favor an exploration of the failed bond between Antoinette and her biological mother, Annette.⁹

This essay will treat the parallels that exist between the failed bonds with both Antoinette's mother and her motherland.

Many scholars¹⁰ note the strained relationship between Antoinette and her mother, which grows more distant through Antoinette's adolescence. In diagnosing this mother-daughter relationship, scholars point to Julia Kristeva's¹¹ theory of identity development, which discusses bonding between mothers and daughters. According to Kristeva, the daughter's gaze on her mother, a reflected image, is a central part of identity formation during a young woman's developmental years. Rhys's mother and daughter characters in *Wide Sargasso Sea* do not properly experience this crucial state of appropriate female development. Too often, scholars have read this failed mother-daughter bond as an integral cause of Antoinette's failed marriage

⁹ See, for example:

Fayad, Mona. "Unquiet Ghosts: The Struggle for Representation in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*." *MFS*

Modern

Fiction Studies Fall 1988 34.No. 3 (1988): 437-52. *Project Muse*. Web.

Kaplan, Cora. "Fictions of Feminism: Figuring the Maternal: Virginia Woolf and the Fictions of Psychoanalysis by

Elizabeth Abel: Rhys, Stead, Lessing, and the Politics of Empathy by Judith Kegan Gardiner."

Feminist Studies Spring 20.1 (1994): 153-67. Web. 31 Mar. 2014.

¹⁰Hirsch, Marianne. *The Mother/daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989. Print.

¹¹ Kristeva, Julia. "Revolution in Poetic Language." *The Kristeva Reader*. Comp. Toril Moi. New York: Columbia

UP, 1986. 90-123. Print.

and manic psychological state by the end of the novel. However, closer analysis of Rhys's novel reveals that Antoinette's failed bond with her mother, for which her mother is primarily responsible, parallels the failed bond between Antoinette and her motherland, the country of her origins, England.

Antoinette was born in Jamaica and her developmental years were spent on the island; therefore, Jamaica acts as a substitute motherland in the absence of the young girl's bond with England. Antoinette gazes into the Jamaican landscape and sees a reflected image of herself—wild and colorful. In England, she feels imprisoned and disconnected from the land. This essay shows that Rhys uses maternal or nurturing diction to describe the West Indies, while using detached diction to describe England. Rhys uses such diction to illuminate how geography, or motherlands, shape a citizen's national identity in the same way that psychological theorists have argued biological mothers shape their children's identity. In sum, Antoinette's detachment from both her mother and England must be repaired by forming new attachments with substitute mother figures: Christophine and Coulibri.

II. A Failed Mother-Daughter Bond

In order to understand Antoinette's failed bond with England, one must first explore the failed bond between Antoinette and her mother because the bonds with both country and biological mother are parallel. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Antoinette's mother and father are integral to the colonizing effort in Jamaica, which is why the young Englishwoman is displaced at birth from her motherland, England. The impetus for the novel's plot is a native Creole uprising that destroys the colonizer's home and authority, and in turn, establishes Creole independence. Rhys explores the effects of this power shift on the relationship between her protagonist, Antoinette, and Antoinette's mother, Annette. The failed attempt to establish an English colony in Jamaica ruins Annette's happiness on the island and deeply affects the relationship between mother and daughter. According to Jane Garrity, English women, especially in the twentieth century, were

considered mothers of their country. The women were responsible for procreating and producing white, educated, English children to advance England's colonizing efforts. Garrity observes:

British women were viewed primarily as mothers, not daughters, in the eyes of the State. Valued for their role as reproductive conduits, white Englishwomen's bodies were subjected to a variety of regulatory practices that sought to construct them, physically as well as spiritually, as potential mothers of the British race. Chiefly valued as national assets because they could bear healthy white citizens, these select Englishwomen would both stabilize the imaginary borders of the nation and contribute to the expansion of its empire. (Garrity 1)

Thus, Annette's goal is to give birth to patriotic citizens, who nationalistically identify with England. Though Rhys never narrates from Annette's perspective, readers understand the character through other character's descriptions of her, which are mostly provided by Antoinette. Yet, Rhys still manages to suggest Annette's shame for failing to fulfill her duties as one of England's mothers, and due to her shame, Annette creates distance between her and her daughter.

After Antoinette marries, the young woman describes her mother to her new husband, Rochester. Antoinette specifically uses "shame" to characterize Annette's approach to parenting. She says, "[t]hen there was that day when she saw I was growing up like a white nigger and she was *ashamed* of me, it was after that day that everything changed" (79 emphasis added). Because of Antoinette's cultural and nationalistic connection to Coulibri and its islanders, Annette rejects her daughter as she is, failing to properly bond with her. Annette recognizes all of Antoinette's childhood playmates and their games, teacher's and their education system, elders and their wisdom have origins in Jamaica and not England. For example, Antoinette forms a friendship with a black Creole girl, Tia. The two girls spend many summer days playing and swimming together. One day, as the two girls play at the pool, Antoinette's dress is ruined. Tia lends Antoinette her dress to wear back to Coulibri because Annette expected company that afternoon. Annette is mortified in front of her guests when she sees her daughter enter with Tia's

ragged old dress, saying to Christophine, “[s]he must have another dress,” said my mother. ‘Somewhere.’ But Christophine told her loudly that it shameful. She run wild, she grow up worthless. And nobody care” (15). Annette’s lack of parental control of her English daughter is obvious to even the black Creole servants, and Christophine is quit to critique the wild way Annette allows her daughter to appear in public-- like a “white nigger,” lacking decorum and proper English manners.

Annette agrees her daughter does not reflect the formalities of England, calling her daughter “Marooned,” which is a term used to describe a person who is disconnected or detached from his or her homeland.¹² Annette adopts a critical perspective of her daughter’s Jamaican upbringing. After the incident with Antoinette’s borrowed dress, the young girl recalls, “All that evening my mother didn’t speak to me or look at me and I thought, ‘she is ashamed of me’” (15). Annette’s shame is not just self inflicted; rather, other English colonizers are depicted as gossipers, who are also concerned with Antoinette’s lack of an English identity. Antoinette recalls, “I had heard what all these smooth smiling people said about her when she was not listening and they did not guess I was” (17). Their gossip is never blatantly exposed, yet the white community’s talk as well as Christophine’s critiques fuel Annette’s shameful concern that her daughter may be marooned. Annette is confronted with evidence of her daughter’s lack of an English identity, and the mother recognizes her responsibility in that. She regrets the family’s move to Jamaica, which has detached Antoinette from England, her only hope of forming a true English national identity.

As mentioned above, Kristeva’s theories of female identity development are particularly useful in understanding the process of bonding with both a mother or a motherland. In her theories of identity formation, the natural progression of a daughter’s development includes a stage of separation from her mother. Such separation causes the mother and daughter to reflect

¹² “Maroon, v.” *Oxford English Dictionary*.

one another's personality. Thus, Annette sees her daughter, a reflected image of herself, and turns in shame from her daughter's strong connection to Jamaica and ambiguous concept of England.

To illustrate Antoinette's poor concept of England, which causes Annette such shame, Antoinette discusses geography with her maidservant, Christophine. Antoinette asks, "'Is it true,' she said, 'that England is like a dream? Because one of my friends who married an Englishman wrote and told me so. She said this place London is like a cold dark dream sometimes'" (47).

Using the words cold and dark to describe England, Antoinette further demonstrates her limited perceptions of England. As Garrity suggests, the responsibility for Antoinette's poor concept of England falls directly on Annette's inability to fulfill her duty as one of England's mothers.

Annette begins to express signs of her inner shame for having neglecting her parenting duties to raise a patriotic Englishwoman. Antoinette recalls,

A frown came between her black eyebrows, deep--it might have been cut with a knife. I hated this frown and once I touched her forehead trying to smooth it. But she pushed me away, not roughly but calmly, coldly, without a word, as if she had decided once and for all that I was useless to her. (11)

By no accident, the word "cold" is used yet again to describe Antoinette's mother, just as she did in describing Antoinette's motherland, England. By doing so, Rhys accomplishes two things: First, the writer personifies England as cold, using the same diction she once used to describe Annette. England, then, has a personality, a psychology, and a relationship to Antoinette. Second, Rhys places both Annette and England in the same category as unnurturing. As I will show later, though both the mother and the motherland are prescribed the task of nurturing Antoinette, neither succeeds, and the young girl must eventually find substitutes for each. In another place, As Antoinette continues to note her mother's distance and their failed relationship, the young girl recalls a particular instance from which the mother-daughter relationship could not be salvaged and must be substituted.

After the family survives a fire that burns their house and kills a child, Antoinette's brother, Anette's coldness towards her daughter increases, and the mother's pain cannot be soothed by anyone. Antoinette recounts unsuccessfully attempting to comfort her mother:

I put my arms round her and kissed her. She held me so tightly that I couldn't breathe and I thought, 'It's not her.' Then, 'It must be her.' She looked at the door, then at me, then at the door again. I could not say 'He is dead,' so I shook my head. 'But I am here, I am here,' I said, and she said 'No,' quietly. Then 'No no no' very loudly and flung me from her. (28-9)

First, Antoinette is surprised by her mother's embrace, which only occurs in the novel once. The young girl questions whether she receives such warmth from the same woman she previously described as cold. Next, Annette pushes her daughter away from her and physically illustrates their severed relationship. The coldness between Antoinette and her mother is most concrete in this interaction. The remainder of the novel does not redeem the mother-daughter relationship; in fact, as Antionette continues developing, their failed bond deeply influences the young woman's connection, or lack thereof, to her motherland, England. Therefore, the young girl will seek a substitute mother in Jamaica.

Though, Antoinette is not ethnically Creole, she repeatedly identifies with the culture and plight of the black islanders. Both Antoinette's physical and cultural distance from England--as it is parallel to the distance between the young woman and her mother--causes Antoinette to seek new mother-like figures. She establishes strong, nurturing relationships with Christophine, a Creole servant, and also with Jamaica's landscape. In sum, Antoinette exchanges the failed relationship with her mother and her mother country for new, more accessible mother figures. In fact, when Antoinette reflects on the shift of power and the colony's collapse, she recognizes her family may have to move away from the Coulibri estate. Antoinette says, "When I was safely home I sat close to the old wall at the end of the garden. It was covered with green moss soft as velvet and I never wanted to move again. Everything would be worse if I moved" (13). One

scholar, Simone Alexander, shows a strong correlation between the mother-daughter bond and the bond between a woman and her country. She specifically finds this correlation is often situated in literature from colonized African or Caribbean countries. Alexander states, "In short, the daughter ... illuminates the personal and political relationships with the mother, the motherlands, and the mother country" (Alexander 8). Alexander's argument has political implications, suggesting a Caribbean woman will ultimately reject her mother because the mother represents how a "colonial [or patriarchal] yoke" binds colonized people.

III. Substitute Mother Figures--Christophine and Jamaica

Until now, my essay has explored the strained relationship between Antoinette and Annette, which is the product of Annette's shame for her inability to fulfil her role as one of England's mothers. These English mothers are charged with raising children who develop a strong English identity, and when Annette fails, she can hardly stand to engage in relationship with her daughter. Now, my essay will turn to show Antoinette's efforts to establish substitute mother figures. Mary Lou Emery provides a useful term with which to discuss Antoinette's move to gain the bond of a substitute mother-figure. Emery considers this shift a moment when Antoinette seeks an "elsewhere," which is a person or place with whom a daughter connects after failing to bond with her biological mother or national motherland. In fact, Emery argues even Antoinette's mother suggests the young girl seek the comforts of the island and its inhabitants rather than seek their own successful mother-daughter bond. Looking for an "elsewhere" to inhabit, or a substitute motherland, Antoinette finds such a place on the Coulibri estate in Jamaica, the island through which she developed her identity. The subsequent bond between the girl and the island is far stronger than the bond between the girl and England.

When Rochester arrives, the newlywed couple arranges to live in a small hut in Granbois. Rochester recalls Antoinette taking him to the "little river. 'This is the boundary of Grandbois,'" she said to him, and then, he recalls, "[s]he smiled at me. It was the first time I had seen her smile

simply and naturally. Or perhaps it was the first time I had felt simple and natural with her” (42). When surrounded by the “cobblestone road,” the “large screw pine,” or the overwhelming “sweetness of the air. Cloves...and cinnamon, roses and orange blossom,” Antoinette acts without artifice; rather, her natural charms appear, and she reflects the grace of the land (42). Furthermore, when Antoinette is in tune with the landscape, she is most attractive to Rochester. Though Rochester is attracted to Antoinette, her allure surprises him because her features are what he considers “not English” (39). The newlywed alludes to Antoinette’s distinct detachment from England and striking appearance, as if Jamaica has even influenced her countenance:

I watched her critically. She wore a tricorne hat which became her. At least it shadowed her eyes which are too large and can be disconcerting. She never blinks at all it seems to me. Long, sad, dark alien eyes. Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either.(39)

However, because the young woman does not reflect the charms of England, her husband expresses distress and discomfort. Rochester’s suspicious attitude toward both Antoinette and Jamaica issues a number of marital problems between the couple. Coulibri lacks traditional standards of order, as is seen in its wildly overgrown gardens, that are off putting to Rochester.

When the English husband arrives, he notes the hills of Coulibri are “not only wild but menacing” (41). And later Rochester characterizes the island by saying, “Everything is too much...too much blue, too much purple, too much green. The flowers too red, the mountains too high, the hills too near” (41). In contrast, England’s gardens, as Antoinette witnesses through dreams, are “surrounded by a stone wall and the trees are different trees. I do not know them,” she says (36). For Antoinette, the warmth and vibrancy of Coulibri becomes embodied by Christophine, and these two nurturing figures--the servant and the island--act in tandem as “elswheres” or replacement mother figures.

As a child, Antoinette’s relationship with Christophine proves more nurturing than the young girl’s relationship with her mother. Antoinette recalls, “When evening came she

[Christophine] sang to me if she was in the mood” (11), and when the family was displaced from their estate, Christophine chose to stay with Antoinette despite other freed slaves abandoning the colonizers. Antoinette insists, “Christophine stayed with me because she wanted to stay” (12). When Antoinette is older and married to Rochester, Rhys depicts Antoinette’s successful mother-daughter bond with Christophine as the girl seeks maternal advice from the old Creole woman. They engage in a conversation about England after Antoinette asks Christophine if she ““think[s] there is such a place?” (67). This question reinforces my argument that Antoinette has an illusory perception of England, and thereby, parallels the failed bond between the young girl and her mother. Christophine responds to the question, saying she does not know if England exists or not.

‘I don’t say I don’t *believe*, I say I don’t *know*, I know what I see with my eyes and I never see it. Besides I ask myself is this place like they tell us? Some say one thing, some different, I hear it freeze your bones and they thief your money, clever like the devil. You have money in your pocket, you look again and bam! No money. Why you want to go to this cold thief place? (67)

In her maternal advice, Christophine presents a compelling argument against England, and she does so by using the same diction Antoinette used to describe her mother--coldness. Judith Raiskin argues there is a connection between national identity and female development that much of Rhys’s body of work explores. She shows, “Christophine’s assessment of England...captures the alienation and economic exploitation that Rhys’s women experience in England” (Raiskin 145). Though neither Antoinette or Christophine have yet personally experienced England, both women mirror the other’s description of the landscape as cold and uninviting. In the same conversation, Antoinette presses Christophine, asking what she could do to regain her husband’s interest and affection. Rochester witnesses Antoinette’s national identity is steeped in Coulibri rather than England, he sees they have little in common, and as a result, the groom reveals the couple’s relationship is not built on affection or romance; rather the two marry out of duty and responsibility. This is evident when Rochester, who is a second born son, unable to inherit his

father's estate, writes home to his father. He notes he will "have a modest competence now," suggesting his true desires for marriage lie in his ability to live comfortable despite his place in birth order (41). Christophine gives Antoinette the advice to abandon such a marriage altogether. The Creole woman says, "A man don't treat you good, pick up your skirt and walk out. Do it and he come after you" (66). It is as if Christophine could offer the same advice regarding Antoinette's relationships to England--the young woman should just abandon it. Christophine casts Antoinette's motherland, the girl's mother, and now her husband as uninviting English entities, and suggests Antoinette simply walk away from each.

IV. Conclusion

At the novel's close, Antoinette finally discovers England is a concrete reality and not the dream-like land she imagined. However, in England, Antoinette is disconnected from her own identity, illustrating that the physical displacement from her motherland over a long period of time cannot be repaired. The young woman remarks, "Now they have taken everything away. What am I doing in this place and who am I?" (107). Antoinette's geographical location directly correlates to her self identification, and when she is removed from her substituted motherland, Jamaica, the young woman becomes disoriented from notions of self. She cannot properly bond with her true motherland, which has become a prison of sorts. Antoinette is locked away in Rochester's Thornfield Hall, and from there, the young woman's stifled identity pushes her to the defiant act of setting the English hall aflame and an eventual suicide. Due to the failed bond between both her mother and her motherland, Antoinette's madness is inevitable.

Like Antoinette, Jean Rhys also felt stifled by England. In *Smile Please*, Rhys blatantly professes the failed bond between herself and her proper motherland, England. The writer entitles a section of her autobiography, "It Began to Grow Cold," which illustrates her first interactions with England. She recalls her traveler's anxiety and the embarrassing mistakes she made on the train's journey into England. Rhys tells how her travel companion had to explain the function of hot tap water, which was not endless; the social ritual of bathing daily; and proper etiquette as

they went sight seeing. Visiting Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's Cathedral, and the London zoo, Rhys recalls looking "for one bit of warmth and colour but [she] couldn't find it" (Rhys 81). The writer goes on to describe the same icy, cold, England that Antoinette imagines in her dreams and Christophine predicts in her critiques.

Like Antoinette, Rhys's development through her adolescence in the West Indies, despite her English origins. It is obvious Rhys has not formed a proper bond with her motherland when she finally visits. In fact, it seems neither Rhys nor Antoinette will ever experience English national identity as Jane Garrity describes it. Both the writer and her protagonist experience a distance and a failed bond with their motherland, just like the failed bond between Antoinette and her mother. In essence, geographical landscape is just as, if not more, instrumental in nurturing a person throughout her development. Both Rhys's autobiographical accounts and fiction prove national identity is formed in the setting of an individual's richest experiences, not necessarily in her prescribed motherland.

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THE CALL FROM REJECTION: A MIXEDBLOOD'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

REFUGE IN LOUISE ERDRICH'S *TRACKS*

"Power travels in the bloodlines, handed out before birth. It comes down through the hands... It comes through the eyes, too, belligerent, darkest brown, the eyes of those in the bear clan, impolite as they gaze directly at a person." - Pauline, *Tracks*, Louise Erdrich

"God had overlooked me in the making, given no marks of His favors. I was angles and sharp edges, a girl bent in." - Pauline, *Tracks*, Louise Erdrich

I. Introduction

In 1984, Gerald Vizenor's historical account of the Anishinaabe people recalled the tribe's origin story, which centers on the trickster figure, Naanabozho. After labor for her son, Naanabozho's mother vanished, but the baby boy became the father figure for all consecutive Anishinaabe people. Since then, the Anishinaabe have been called Ojibwe or Chippewa after the settlement of the French and British. They have also experienced a unique history of interracial mixing after European settlement. Thus, the community of Ojibwe people are keenly aware of the plight and experiences of mixedblood individuals. Since its origins, the tribe shows an interest in skin color and tone—the various shades appearing among their mixed people. Vizenor's illustrates the Ojibwes's concern for skin tone: "The Anishinaabeg tell stories that wisdom and the color of their skin were given to them from the sun reflecting on the sacred *miigis* [cowrie] shell" (Vizenor 21). Later, oral stories show a fascination with the differences between white and Ojibwe skin tone, height, and social order. Vizenor cites an oral story from a mixedblood Ojibwe indian who worked for the American Fur Company. He recounted, "tall people are white, educated, they march and give orders, sweat in dark clothes, and hold pet birds in house cages. The little people are mixedbloods who wear bright colors, dance and dream out of time, trick their friends, animals and birds, in good humor" (Vizenor 41). The remainder of Vizenor's book presents a series of oral stories that have been told about the trickster, Nanabozho. Vizner has

written down this oral history for preservation. The stories offer a particularly useful insight with which to read literature that illustrates Anishinaabe protagonists, like works by Ojibwe author Louise Erdrich.

In Erdrich's series of novels, she interweaves the identity narratives of several characters, many of which are mixedblood. In her novel *Tracks*, Erdrich tells the story of a young mixedblood woman, Pauline, who seeks acceptance within the Catholic church after her Ojibwe community repeatedly shuns her. Pauline's complex identity drives her to enact a hideous murder and a violent confrontation between Catholicism and traditional healing ceremonies. By the novel's end, many readers and scholars consider Pauline a betrayer of her community; a case of loss of her native identity; and a sad reminder of Christianity's hypocritical missionary work in America. Though scholars hastily dismisses Pauline's actions as an example of character flaws, this essay will provide a more sympathetic reading of Pauline as a mixedblood character, who lives in a world where she cannot exist wholly in one place or another. Using mixedblood theory, as it relates to internalized oppression, I will show Erdrich's sympathy for the mixedblood who considers her Ojibwe identity to be like a spiritual pilgrimage.

II. Mixedblood Theory As it Should Be

First, a brief discussion of mixed race theory may be useful in understanding Pauline's unique identity. In Vizenor's historical treatment of mixed race Anishinaabe people, he points to Euroamerican settlers who insisted on determining American Indian identity based on mathematical markers, otherwise known as blood quantum.

Some mixedbloods were cast in literature and official reports as the grievous reminders of the romantic past, or the loose coins from the economic rape of the land, but whatever the images, mixedbloods were clearcut, with few exceptions, from the political present. (Vizenor 106)

Government officials considered mixedbloods an opportunity to mark the gradual diminishing or "vanishing" Native Americans over time. Colonizers believed the more intermixed Natives

became with other cultures and ethnicities, the less prominent their presence would be in America, and Natives would eventually be a legend of America's past. They were wrong; as a living culture, instead of being ultimately erased, Native American identity is ever changing. However, internalized oppression caused many Native communities, especially those in Erdrich's novels, to distance themselves from Natives with lower blood quantum, sadly making mixedbloods feel outside of the dominant Ojibwe culture.

In Louis Owens's *Mixedblood Messages* he considers it rare to read a Native author's work who is not of mixed race. Even still, he admits, there is little to no literary theory as it relates to mixedblood characters and authors. Instead, he says, many literary theorists have too often considered Natives to exist in a limiting "territory" rather than on a "frontier." The frontier "is the zone of the trickster, a shimmering always changing zone of multifaceted contact within which every utterance is challenged and interrogated, all referents put into question" (Owens 26). On the frontier, readers and scholars can expect characters to constantly seek identity formation, appropriating and assimilating, as they are confronted with new ideas. Mixedblood authors can be expected to interact with their characters as if they are fluid and malleable individuals. Therefore, the frontier metaphor insists that readers consider both the characters and authors as constantly shifting or situating their identity according to a landscape. Thus, there is no essential Native identity; rather, honest identity formation requires hybridity and fluidity.

Even still, many members of native communities resist the hybridization of native identity, and they consider the mixed blood a symbol of loss. In Erdrich's novel, several full blood Ojibwe characters illustrate this, feeling confused and sorry for Pauline's "loss" of Ojibwe identity because of her mixed blood. Nanapush, a character who symbolizes all of the old tradition reflects on Pauline's mixed origins:

She was, to my mind, an unknown mixture of ingredients, like pale bannock that sagged or hardened. We never know what to call her, or where she fit or how to

think when she was around. So we tried to ignore her, and that worked as long as she was quiet. (39)

As Nanapush illustrates, the mixedblood figure cannot be easily categorized into the dominant western discourse of identity, which expects people to exist in either one or another community or culture without interference from another. Mixedblood characters confuse this binary, and are often portrayed existing in a liminal space--not fully tribal or Euroamerican contexts. This “transcultural space is always vulnerable, easily penetrated, and in endless flux, and within this instability lies [the frontier’s] vitality” (Owens 33). Indeed, the continuance of a culture relies heavily on its ability to change, adapt, and hybridize over time.

Therefore, the mixedblood character’s assimilation to western society should not be shameful to the tribe; rather, that character’s ability to adapt to the frontier landscape should be applauded and regarded with the same fascination that an audience watches the intricacies, complexities, and whirl of a beautiful dance. “The mixedblood is not a cultural broker but a cultural breaker, break-dancing trickster-fashion through all signs, fracturing the self reflexive mirror of the dominant center, deconstructing rigid borders, slipping between the seams, embodying contractions, and contradancing across every boundary” (Owens 41). Using this theory of mixedblood hybridization, Erdrich’s character, Pauline, can be illuminated, not as the monstrous betrayer that many scholars insist she is, but as a confused individual attempting to exist in the shifting landscape of the frontier.

III. Pauline’s Mixed Identity: Shunned from Community

Though Pauline is a remarkable study of mixed identity, she is unfortunately underappreciated by her Ojibwe community, and their rejection of her produces Pauline’s internalized oppression. Susan Friedman uses Frantz Fanon’s theories of racism to show internalized oppression deeply influences Pauline’s “self hatred, [which] takes the form of denial of her Indian heritage and the adoption of a self-destructive Catholicism” (Friedman 108). Pauline reports her mother’s mixed identity was obvious by her skin color. She says, “I wanted to

be like my mother, who showed her half-white. I wanted to be like my grandfather, pure Canadian” (14). In an attempt to connect with her mother and French Canadian grandfather, Pauline rejects Ojibwe art, replacing it with traditionally Euroamerican crafts. Her father turned from her, she says, “when I would not bead, when I refused to prick my fingers with quills or hid rather than rub brains on the stiff skins of animals” (14). Thus, her closest Ojibwe relative rejects her, but she is also met with aversion from white society. Pauline attempts to establish acceptance from other white Canadian girls her age, but she cannot win their favor. Visiting her white cousin, Russell, she recalls the ease with which he was accepted in white contexts, and she compares his experience to her own desire for such acceptance.

Russell and I were different. He... never fell to wishing he owned a pair of shoes like those that passed on the feet of white girls, shoes of hard red leather decorated with cut holes. He never listened to what those girls said about him, or imagined them doubling back to catch him by the hand. In truth I hardly rinsed through the white girls’ thoughts” (15).

This passage is followed by a paragraph break--a momentary breath, which is followed by, “that winter, we heard no word from my family” (15)--a double blow for Pauline. Not only does the white community ignore her without so much as a thought, but her Ojibwe family does not inquire after her while she is away from home.

Though Pauline actively chooses to engage in the cultural markers of her white heritage, forsaking Ojibwe traditions, she admits her efforts were in attempt to remain vital to the increasingly diversified and colonized frontier. She chose white crafts over Indian ones “because even as a child I saw that to hang back was to perish” (14). However, Pauline’s distance from the tribe is not solely her fault. In an above example, her father “scorns” her for her choice for a hybrid identity. And later, other Ojibwes show disdain for Pauline, which increases and solidifies her separation from the Ojibwe community.

Pauline recalls the whispers of gossip about her by other Ojibwes. In fact, Nanapush employs the discourse of loss to describe Pauline's choice for hybridization: "We lose our children in different ways. They turn their faces to the white towns, ... or they become so full of what they see in the mirror there is no reasoning with them anymore" (170). And in several other places, the novel shows the Ojibwe community's preoccupation with skin color and essential Native identity. Nanapush mentions the tribe is overrun by mixed raced families as they boldly procreated and grew the mixedblood population. Throughout Nanapush's sections of narration, he speaks directly to an audience, Lulu. In contrast, Pauline's narration is not directed to any particular audience; her stories lack a listener. Friedman considers this further proof of Pauline's separation from the Ojibwe community, her internalized oppression, and her human need to seek a substitute culture for acceptance.

IV. Seeking Alternate Acceptance: The Christian Call

Pauline's search for a community that values her unique identity led her to the missionary endeavors of the Catholic church situated near Ojibwe land allotments. Vizenor's history of the Ojibwe people focuses a great deal on Catholic influences on the tribe. With missionaries, came a number of new experiences for the tribe to reckon with, including among other things, the fur trade, Christian education, and opportunities for church involvement. "The passionate [French] missionaries latonized the woodland dead and thundered through their epistles that the Anishinaabeg were mere children, one generation removed from savagism" (Vizenor 23). Because of her mixed identity and rejection from both the Ojibwe and white communities, Pauline seeks refuge in the church. She confides in Nanapush, "I have no family,' I said... 'I am alone and have no land. Where else would I go but to the nuns?'" (142). Recently, a great deal of scholarship surrounding Erdrich's novel has asked whether an American Indian can be both Christian and tribal. Is it conflicting for Natives to join the very church that relentlessly, and sometimes violently, proselytized and imposed?

As is illustrated by Vine Deloria's angry rants about the Christian church, many scholars do not consider Pauline's religious hybridization a valuable trait. In fact, Deloria once asserted in his book, *God is Red*, that a god or gods traditionally are assigned to a specific, identifiable ethnic group. For him, it is difficult to accept the god of the Jews who had nothing to do with the Ojibwe people. Later, in *For This Land*, he claims Christianity is "the chief evil ever to have been loosed on the planet" (Deloria 146). Like other Ojibwe characters who continually shun Pauline, Deloria and Friedman ultimately reject Pauline for her subscription to the Catholic church and are unable to understand her complex mixed identity in.

Other scholars provide justification for Pauline's choice to find reconciliation of her mixed identity in the Catholic church. Owens would argue a hybrid Native-Christian religion is part of the frontier landscape and is repeatedly evident in literature about mixed raced characters. In James Treat's study of Christian Natives, he shows, and Erdrich biography reveals, it is absolutely possible and acceptable for native identity to intertwine with Christianity because the two groups often have similar goals.

Like native traditions, Christian institutions can mediate social power and material resources and provide avenues for the development and recognition of religious leadership. Like native traditions, Christian liturgical forms can facilitate community reconciliation and allow for the fulfillment of ceremonial obligations. Like native tradition, Christian teachings can articulate beliefs and values that provide direction in daily life and in overcoming personal struggles, and that form the basis for prophetic critique and political action. Like native tradition, Christian spiritual practices can cultivate meaning and purpose through religious devotion, offering a viable alternative to secular materialism, and can challenge devotees to a life of responsibility and service. (Treat 10)

Treat shows the similarities between both the Native and Christian traditions. They are both beneficial to the participant, but Catholicism asserted a strong hold in the new American

landscape. Thus, characters like Pauline recognize more opportunities in the thriving Catholic church than in the Ojibwe religion, whose tribal community expressed disdain for her in the first place. Finally, Treat asserts, “to dismiss all native Christians as acculturated, anachronistic traces of religious colonialism, is to miss innumerable demonstrations of their insightful historical and social analysis, their complex and sophisticated religious creativity, and their powerful devotion to personal and communal survival” (Treat 10). Therefore, Erdrich contends that her mixedblood characters should not only freely seek a hybrid identity in the frontier landscape, but it is perfectly acceptable to find such an identity in the Catholic church.

Further, Pauline is not an example of a Christian convert who is forced to religious submission by violence or cultural genocide; she is not one who seeks Christianity “to raid, trade with, or borrow from other religions and then retreat to [her] own [world] to adapt or reinvent [her] imports.” Instead, Sheila Hughes argues that Pauline is a “border-dweller,” one who is “invested and implicated in multiple spheres of belief and practice” (Hughes 59). Like Pauline, other border-dwellers’s teachings were either entirely rejected by tribal members, fully accepted, or hybridized.

Though Pauline’s teachings and Christian practices are not accepted by her Ojibwe community, she attests to her spiritual call from God to serve Him as a collector of souls, an evangelist who influences the belief of fellow Ojibwes, giving her purpose among her community. She recalls, “[t]he wind shook in the trees. The sky hardened to light. And that is when, twirling dizzily, my wings raked the air, and I rose in three powerful beats and saw what lay below” (68). This is the first recorded instance of her spiritual power through the Christian God, so Pauline answers the call by joining the nunnery. Later, she is visited by visions of God at night in the convent’s kitchen. She accepts his command to harvest souls and create new Christian believers. “After that,” Pauline recounts, “although I kept the knowledge close, I knew I was different. I had the merciful scavenger’s heart” (69). Pauline’s call to the Christian faith

cannot be judged for its veracity because of its foundation in faith, which can neither be proved nor negated.

However, Edrich provides several examples of such calls in other genres of her work, which legitimate the Christian call among American Indians. In a collection of poems called *Baptism of Desire*, Edrich illustrates the call of a Saint Claire:

First I heard the voice throbbing across the river.
I saw the white phosphorescence of his robe.
As he stepped from each footfall a black ripple,
from each widening ring a wave,
from the waves a sea that covered the moon.

Saint Clare's mystical vision of God approaching her reflects Pauline's experience with God. He comes slowly but powerfully; carefully but majestically. He can take any shape, even in the form of nature--like a river, tree, or mighty bird, or moon--and is always effective in capturing the attention of his audience.

So I was seized in total night
and I abandoned myself in his garment
like a fish in a net. The slip knots
tightened on me and I rolled until the sudden cry hauled me out.

Saint Clare illustrates the inescapability of such a calling, and her experience justifies Pauline's seized attention to the Catholic church and relationship to Christianity.

Then this new element, a furnace of mirrors,
in which I watch myself burn.
The scales of my old body melt away like coins,
for I was rich, once, and my father
had already chosen my husband. ("Saint Clare: 1, The Call")

Here, the saint, newly called to the Christian faith, recalls her family, what she is leaving behind. Like Pauline, she rejects social standards by ignoring the arrangement of a marriage and the patriarchal authority of her father. Saint Clare is refined by fire in a “furnace of mirrors,” and her old self is melted away, scale by scale. By no accident, the fishscale imagery parallels Anishinaabe history.

The tribe’s land was situated near the Great Lakes, and much of the people’s traditional religious context is illustrated in symbols of the lake and its wildlife. Just as fish scales melt away from Saint Clare at her call, Pauline sheds her previous desire to culturally, physically, and religiously identify with Ojibwe people. Pauline asks the Lord to “take this,” a series of memories and items that reminded her of her humanity--food, sex, work, community, etc. She ventures into mortifications of the flesh, in effect, to melt the scales of her mixed identity. “And he did,” melt these scales, she says. “I grew in knowledge. Skins were stripped from my eyes. Every day I saw more clearly and I marveled at what He showed me” (137). Michelle Hessler, shows that like Saint Clare, “Pauline conscientiously suppresses all memories of her family, as her ultimate goal is to assimilate into the [Christian] community” (Hessler 40). Her relationship to the Anishinaabe shifts, becoming like a missionary, a collector of souls. This shift is consistent with the mixblood’s need to adapt in the frontier landscape.

Discussing Erdrich’s saint poetry, Hughes argues, “all of these poems emphasize in some way or another...the essential changeability and multiplicity of both physical and spiritual reality. They suggest, in turn, that flexibility and adaptability determine the vitality of any religious form—regardless of origin or tradition” (Hughes 61). Like the mixedblood characters or authors, Hughes argues, Pauline’s calling is an opportunity to shift her identity within the changing frontier landscape. In fact, Erdrich calculatively inserts Pauline’s memory of the Catholic God helping shape her new identity: “He said I was not whom I had supposed. I was an orphan and my parents had died in grace, and also, despite my deceptive features, I was not one speck of Indian but wholly white. He Himself had dark hair although His eyes were blue as bottleglass, so I

believed. I wept” (137). As God gives Pauline new identity, she has found the acceptance, purpose, and confirmation she formerly sought through her Ojibwe community.

Edrich successfully creates a “‘third space’ for religious experience—and expose[s] points of contact from which to transform both Catholic and Protestant theologies in North America. And in doing so...unsettle[s] radical oppositions both within Christianity and between it and tribal religions” (Hughes 60). Pauline’s choice to accept the Catholic call, though somewhat concerned with service of her Ojibwe community, seems to be equally concerned with her *own* power and authority within the community that once shunned her. Here, Pauline’s call becomes detrimental and subverts the purity of her conversion. Though her quest for an accepting community was genuine, Pauline’s actions, after receiving God’s prescribed identity and confirmation, begin to assert too much of her own power.

V. Pauline’s Blasphemous Power

As a nun, Pauline narcissistically experiences and asserts her power in the community like never before. Hessler says, “Pauline’s ultimate goal is to assert dominance over Fleur. As a member of the reservation community, Pauline is inferior to Fleur, but as a member of the cloister she belongs to the mainstream Christian community which repeatedly dispossesses the [Anishinaabe]” (Hessler 42). Her Christian identity, then, does not reflect either the Christ-like assertions of the Church nor their vindictive and deceitful colonial goals. Instead, Pauline’s Christianity is malformed, and it becomes a false cure for the rejection she experiences as a mixedblood Ojibwe indian by raising herself above the God she serves.

Pauline notes the poor state of the Ojibwe community after foreign notions of land allotments, ownership, taxes, and smallpox are inflicted on the tribe. The people steadily die off, and the tribe suffers at the hand of the dominant Euroamericans. She blames the tribe’s slump on the Mitchimantia lake god’s inability to stand against the Catholic God, who so graciously saved her from the tribe’s calamities. Speaking in the third person about herself, Pauline reveals her narcissism as she notes the poor state of the Ojibwe community, including the death and disease

that invades all families within the community. Yet, rather than relying on her Lord to remedy the tribe's problems, Pauline usurps her God, asserting her own authority and perceived spiritual power.

Our Lord, who had obviously made the whites more shrewd, as they grew in number, all around, some even owning automobiles, while the Indians receded and coughed to death and drank. It was clear that Indians were not protected by the thing in the lake or by the other Manitous who lived in trees, the bush, or spirits of animals that were hunted so scarce they became discouraged and did not mate. There would have to come a turning, a gathering, another door. And it would be Pauline who opened it, same as she closed the Argus lockers. Not Fleur Pillager. (139)

In later passages, Pauline discusses the seriousness with which she takes her calling to collect souls. Her faith that was once fueled by acceptance by the church, begins to take new shape. Pauline performs her Catholic duties with more fervor than necessary. She says she went “out among them with the net of my knowledge. He gave me the mission to name and baptize, to gather souls. Only I must give myself away in return, I must dissolve. I did so eagerly. I had nothing to leave behind” (141). Following this, Pauline marks her own religious pride with the comment, “I fit easily through the eye of a needle. And once I passed to the other side I made my way to the Pillager cabin” (141). As Pauline contends she would fit through the eye of a needle, she speaks with more pride in her faith than any good Christian should assert.¹³ “Although she relinquishes Ojibwa customs, Pauline does not adopt mainstream Catholicism, but rather invents

¹³ Pauline alludes to a passage of scripture in Matthew 19, where a rich young man asks Jesus what he must do to enter the kingdom of heaven, assuring the Son of God that he has kept the most important of the Ten Commandments. Jesus responds, telling the rich man to sell all his possessions; only then can he enter the kingdom. The man doges Jesus' suggestion, and “when the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions” (Matthew 19:22). Jesus uses the man's inability to relinquish his possessions for the sake of the kingdom of God as a teaching example. He says to the listening crowd, “Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God” (Matthew 19: 23-24).

her own version under which she assumes the role of the ‘crow of the reservation’” (Hessler 41). Indeed, Pauline’s comments are just the beginning of her prideful Catholicism. Even still, Erdrich does not allow readers to forsake their sympathetic view of the nun. She continually reminds her audience of Pauline’s marginalized relationship to her community and her subsequent need to prove her own value through religious ceremonies.

V. Two Traditions Go Head to Head: Healing Ceremonies

Pauline acts like a medieval crusader as she interferes with a traditional Ojibwe healing ceremony that was designed to restore Fleur after the violent and painful labor experience of her stillborn baby. Nanapush concocts a plan to address Fleur’s sadness in hopes that she will continue as a symbol of the tribe’s vitality and traditions--the Anishinaabe relationship to the lake, to the land, and to love medicine. He arranges for a drum to be played by Moses Pillager. “This instrument was never allowed to touch the ground, and was decorated with long ribbons, with beaded skirt and tabs” (188). He believes his ceremony will allow Fleur to reach her hands in a boiling pot of water that embodies the spirit of the Anishinaabe lake god. First her hand and arms must be coated with two different plants: “One is yarrow and the other I will not name,” he says. “These are the sources of my medicine... Only because of Pauline, I did not complete the job” (188).

Pauline hears of their attempt to save Fleur, and determines it is better for the Christian God to save her rather than the lake Manitou. The Ojibwe, unaccustomed to shooing guests away, allows Pauline to stay, though she is a distraction. Pauline prays loudly in Latin, prayers of the church, disturbing the rhythm of the drum. Nanapush says Pauline is like “a scavenger, a bird that lands only for its purpose” (189). Pauline scavenges for Fleur’s soul to be added to a list of church converts, and like an animal, overcome by foolish pride, Pauline crawls toward the boiling ceremony pot. As if she feels she must prove her new identity to the community that once shunned her, Pauline attempts an ultimate act of spiritual hybridity:

She prayed loudly in Catholic Latin, then plunged her hands, unprepared by the crushed roots and marrows of plants into the boiling water. She lowered them farther, and kept them there. Her eyes rolled back into her skull and the skin around her cheeks stretched so tight and thin it nearly split... Moments passed. Then she shrieked, jumped. She clawed straight through the flimsy tent walls, scattering the willow poles, collapsing the blankets and skins... Then she ran, by the light of her scaled arms, and followed the dark path back to town. (190)

Through this ceremony, Fleur is neither healed nor converted. Pauline has failed, and she faults God, whom she can trust no longer. The defeated nun even blames God for her internalized oppression and feelings of worthlessness as a mixedblood in the community, and she blasphemes, saying, "Christ had turned His face from me for other reasons than my insignificance. Christ had hidden out of frailty, overcome by the glitter of copper scales, appalled at the creature's unwinding length and luxury. New devils require new gods" (195). Pauline reenters the liminal space of mixed identity; this time, however, she does not relate to either the Ojibwe or Catholic traditions, and realizes neither can cure her insignificance.

Likewise, Nanapush expresses his disappointment with the failed healing ceremony. To him, Fleur represented the tribe's ability to continue without changing in any way. Though well meaning, Nanapush's dream of Ojibwe essentialism, or a pure cultural moment, is irrational. He says, "Fleur had not saved us... and it now seemed what was happening was so ordinary that it fell beyond her abilities. She had failed too many times, both to rescue us and save her youngest child, who now slept in the branches of bitter oak. Her dreams lied, her vision was obscured, her helper slept deep in the lake, and all her Argus money was long spent" (177). Realizing both the defeat of the Ojibwe and Catholic traditions, the remainder of the novel continues in the vein of hybridity. Nanapush remarks, "[p]ower dies, power goes under the gutters out, ungraspable. It is momentary, quick of flight and liable to deceive" (177). Therefore, each character must establish his or her individual power in the shifting frontier, incorporating parts of each tradition.

VI. Hybrid Individualism

Both Pauline and the other Ojibwe characters must shift their relationship to the changing landscape. Left and right, land allotments were seized by the government because Native owners could not afford to pay taxes, or owners died of smallpox and starvation. In order for the tribe to experience continuance, Erdrich makes a concerted effort to illustrate a tribe's assimilation. As such, the tribe does not lose its heritage or culture; rather it adds to its strength and survival. Nanapush promises Fleur he will avenge the loss of land and life by returning Lulu to the tribe. She was previously taken to boarding school, which greatly bereaved her mother, Fleur. Nanapush realizes he can save Lulu only by complying with the government's encroachment on their land and lives. He must join in the progress of America. Father Damien encourages that Nanapush "should have tried to grasp this new way of wielding influence, this method of leading others with a pen and a piece of paper" (209). Therefore, Nanapush, who before was reluctant to change, usurps documentation systems, school records, and postal services to keep his promise to Fleur. He says, "[t]hat's when I began to see what we were becoming, and the years have borne me out: a tribe of file cabinets and triplicates, a tribe of single-space documents, directives, policy. A tribe of pressed trees. A tribe of chicken-scratch that can be scattered by a wind, diminished to ashes by one struck match" (225). Though the tribe becomes all these things, Nanapush has no choice but to assimilate for the sake of the land and the tribe's continuance. "To become a bureaucrat myself was the only way that I could wade through the letters, the reports, the only place where I could find a ledge to kneel on, to reach through the loophole and draw [Lulu] home" (225). Using the tools of the American government, Erdrich makes Nanapush successful. In fact, as before mentioned, his narrated sections are directed to Lulu, the very girl he attempted to save through bureaucracy. Yet, the very context of his narration is oral tradition. As Visnor's historical accounts prove, oral tradition is widely influential for the Ojibwe people. As Nanapush speaks stories to Lulu of her origin, he invigorates the people's old traditions.

Though Nanapush's hybridity complicates essential Ojibwe identity, Erdrich illustrates the state of Pauline's hybridity, which experiences an added layer of confusion. As a mixedblood American Indian, Pauline must reconcile herself to not only the white and Ojibwe communities, but also to the Catholic community. Erdrich is particularly concerned for the status of a mixedblood character in the shifting frontier of America. She presents a character who unravels entirely--unable to rely on either of the three dominant traditions. As a true marker of the mixedblood's plight in America, Pauline must rely on her own individuality--neither fully accepting or rejecting Christianity over Ojibwe tradition. Pauline determines, "[b]ecause my own God was lamblike and meek and *I* had strengthened, daily, on His tests and privations, it was *I* who was armored and armed even though my hands were loosely bound. It was *I* with the cunning of serpents, *I* with skill to win forgiveness" (195 emphasis added). Pauline continues to seek acceptance in light of her mixed identity, but she finds she must first accept herself--her complex makeup and unique liminality.

The still-sainted nun begins to believe she can control God himself, and thinks she is leaving Christ no choice but to support her endeavors to continue proselytizing the Ojibwe community. She says, "If I did not forsake Jesus in His extremity, then He would have no other choice but to make me whole. I would be His champion, His savior too" (195). Calling herself the savior of Christ, in an inversion of Christian teaching, Pauline fashions herself into a goddess. She attempts taking on the qualities of the Christian God, who she characterizes as, "beyond hinderance or reach." She also makes herself unreachable by anyone, even her fellow nuns, associating power with elusiveness. In these passages, she illustrates her own internalized oppression, for which readers should be sympathetic. All her life, those who had true power and influence over the stability of her emotions and identity have been just slightly out of her reach: Her father sent her away to Argus to live with her white family; the Ojibwe community, as Nanapush admits, actively ignored her; and now, God's power is just out of reach during the healing ceremony, when she most needs to prove Him to the native community. All her life,

Pauline feels as if she has been snubbed, duped, and eluded by all the powers she expected to have a positive effect on her formation of identity.

Dangerously, Pauline's assertiveness toward self-actualization causes the final hideous acts many scholars berate her for. However, knowing the context of Pauline's mixed identity and the liminal frontier Owens applies to mixed-blood characters, her actions are tragic yet understandable. She has been pushed by the rejections of others to the point of a completely fractured identity. Therefore the suffering nun recalls "scattering [herself] in all directions," and she says "[I] stupefied my own brain in the process so thoroughly that the only things left of intelligence were my doubled-over hands" (202). Thinking she has finally killed the Manitou in the lake--the god that symbolized the Ojibwe's vitality, the group who first snubbed the mixed-blood Pauline--the nun accidentally strangles Napoleon Morrissey with the thorn-like points of her rosary. Though she realizes her mistake, the self-inflated Pauline recalls

Then I stood. I was a poor and noble creature now, dressed in earth like Christ, in furs like Moses Pillager, draped in snow or simple air. God would love me better as a lily of the field... Again, again, on the way up the hill, I threw myself into the ditches. I rolled in dead leaves, in moss, in defecation of animals. I plastered myself with dry leaves and the feathers of a torn bird... so that by the time I came to the convent, by the time I crawled and stumbled past the early risers, I was nothing human, nothing victorious, nothing like myself. I was no more than a piece of the woods. (203)

As Pauline runs from the scene of the murder, she does whatever is necessary to cover her nakedness, her sins. She must adapt, taking on a new skin by rolling in the muddy woods; her appearance is wild and otherworldly. Here, Pauline literally embodies the frontier landscape Owens describes--shifty and shimmering--and Erdrich's mesmerizing physical description provides evidence for a mixed-blood character's inner disposition. As a character who exists in a liminal space, Pauline is capable of adapting to a variety of situations or landscapes, even by

clothing herself with a new landscape, and she does what is necessary to maintain her vitality in the unsolidified frontier.

Though Pauline killed a man, destroyed relations to the Ojibwe tribe, and blasphemously did all this in the name of Christianity, Pauline feels a sense of accomplishment, as if her Christian mission has been victorious. Stemming from her earlier quest to establish a hybrid identity, which she now realizes cannot fully belong to either the Ojibwe, white, or Christian communities, Pauline is forced to an inflated sense of self ability. She says, “I believe that the monster [lake manitou] was tamed that night, sent to the bottom of the lake and chained there by my deed” (204). She also believes she has humbled the tribal community to submission of her authority as a spiritual leader, and she plans to influence and guide them, ““to purify their minds, to model them in [her] own image” by teaching in the new government school (205). Pauline continues to blaspheme, using the same language God uses as he creates Adam and Eve in Genesis. The Old Testament creator makes the statement that Adam and Eve, and all subsequent humans, are created in his image; thereby, they have advanced, thinking minds and a soul that eternally lives after death. By asserting her own status as a goddess or creator, Pauline’s hybrid individuality persists. By Erdrich’s design, Pauline’s need to constantly reestablish identity, a repercussion of being mixed race, is exaggerated and extends to her unfathomable claims to divinity. Yet, Erdrich depicts such exaggeration in order to illuminate the confusions of existing as a mixedblood in a Euroamerican world, which relies on its binary oppositions and ability to categorize individuals and cannot establish a proper place for mixedbloods. Pauline’s religious hybridization has been heavily contested among scholars because of its murderous and blasphemous context. However, these scholars too quickly forget the early Pauline who merely seeks acceptance in any community. They also forget it is necessary for the mixedblood character to establish some kind of a hybrid identity.

VII. Conclusion

In an interview with Hertha D. Wong, Louise Erdrich's husband, Michael Dorris, attests to the confusion and liminality of his own mixed identity. He says,

When I lived with my father's side of the family, I was too light. And when I lived with my mother's side of the family, there was a kind of distancing because of my other experience. I[t] may be internal and psychological more than it's real. I think it's something that a lot of mixed bloods relate to—going to a new situation always feeling peripheral, although other people might not feel that way. (46)

In the same interview, the couple reveals their collaborative writing process, which usually begins with a particular idea or concept they feel must be illuminated through fictional characters. Many of their characters are tropes for reality, leaving room to speculate that a mixedblood's "peripheral" relationship to the world could easily become, like Pauline, destructive to a broader community. Yet, the Dorris and Erdrich's discussion of mixedblood identity and its complexities remains sympathetic. In an interview with Michael Schumacher, Erdrich said,

I mean, you can't deny your own background. I guess I also had to work out a sense of responsibility.... There were lots of people with mixed blood, lots of people who had their own confusions. I realized that this was part of my life—it wasn't something that I was making up—and that it was something I *wanted* to write about. I wanted to tell it because it was something that should be told. I was *forced* to write about it. [laughs] I didn't choose the material; it chose me. It's not as though I set out to do it. (Schumacher 174-75)

Saying she was inspired to write about the mixedblood character's complex identity, in part from her own experiences as an Ojibwe/French Canadian American, Erdrich's comments add a level of reality to Pauline, whose physical actions potentially stem from the inner turmoil of her own author. Erdrich does not berate Pauline, or any of the her other mixedblood characters, for their

instability or destructive qualities. Rather, she seeks to tell their stories so her audience can adopt empathy for those existing in frontier landscape and forming hybrid identities.

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A STORYTELLER'S RIGHT: LESLIE MARMON SILKO'S EXERCISE OF
IDENTITY SOVEREIGNTY

"Cultures can and indeed cannot do otherwise than come together and deal with one another, not only within the transcultural regions of frontiers or borders but also within the hybridized individual."

Louis Owens

Philip Deloria begins his book *Indians in Unexpected Places* with a photograph entitled, "Red Cloud Woman in Beauty Shop, Denver 1941," which depicts a Native woman dressed in traditional, buckskin and beaded regalia. The woman is sitting under the hood of a salon blow drier, smiling up at the camera while a technician pines over Red Cloud Woman's fingernails. Deloria explains a typical reaction to such an image is the observer's uncomfortable yet delighted chuckle. The observer laughs because he or she assumes there is something absurd happening in the photo. In the remainder of his book, Deloria goes on to answer a key question: "Where do such chuckles come from?" as these reactions are common when Native Americans are paired with symbols of modernity (Deloria 3). In his answer, he defines a few important causes of the observer's chuckle.

First, the good humored observer is aware of his or her expectations—the belief that something will occur one particular way each time it occurs. Deloria says expectation is informed by discourse that has been constructed by several contributors, years, and ideologies. Next, the comical reaction occurs because the observer has placed Red Cloud Woman in the category of anomalous. In other words, Red Cloud Woman does not easily fit within preconceived expectations and ideologies; she, then, is the exception to a rule. To the outsider, it is as if Red Cloud Woman cannot be—should not be—any more than a participant in a primitive, vanishing,

and savage lifestyle, which is how Native Americans have often been depicted and described. In contrast, Red Cloud Woman's identity is far larger than the sum of her dress and braided hair; instead, she has both an individual and communal identity. Placed together, these two identities create an altogether complex person. Non-natives must not chuckle at the sight of a woman in the early 1940s enjoying a bit of pampering—just as much as they should not be surprised by the same modern woman's involvement in an ancient ceremonial dance. In general, an individual's or community's identity is most often textured by many factors—historical abundance or lack of information, shared cultural experiences, ethnic identification, familial structure, and even outside alliances. And individuals or nations possess the inherent a right to declare themselves whomever they believe themselves to be.

In 1968, preserving Native American identity became a paramount concern for both Natives and some non-Natives involved in litigation and politics. Many scholars consider this present era a time of self-determination. Among other things, political policies, governance, and cultural production are largely determined by the nations themselves. Sovereignty of tribes, which is inherent and undeniable, is recognized by other governments and upheld; yet, I would argue sovereignty is not merely a political term that acknowledges a nation's authority over its government. Though it has very much to do with governance and policy, sovereignty is also integral to conversations about identity. How a group or individual represents, brands, or portrays itself in popular culture cannot be determined from the outside. Though many expectations or discourses of ideology inform the outsider's perspective, it is the responsibility of the nation or individual to determine what and how much others will see and experience of their identity. I will use the term identity-sovereignty as a hybrid term that combines all of the complex nuances of forming identity with the long fight to promote Native sovereignty—with all of its inherency and authority. Identity-sovereignty, then, is the ability to promote or to withhold information, culture, art, religious practices, or stories from outsiders—both Native and non-Native alike. Identity-

sovereignty is also the right for a group of people to foster from within their specific cultural memories and traditions—history, song, dance, food, and familial structure.

Therefore, there exists a tension for many nations between promoting and withholding specific information from those who are not tribal members. In my travels through New Mexico, and my interaction with a few of its nineteen pueblos, this tension has become evermore apparent to me. As a non-Puebolan, I was considered a tourist, welcomed into certain information and enlightened; but, I was simultaneously kept far from full knowledge of certain cultural or religious happenings. When visiting Acoma Pueblo, our guide, Brandon, explained how the Acoma people used to open their religious ceremonies to the public. There are several feast days each year, and non-Puebloans were once allowed to visit the top of the mesa and engage in the community's activity. However, Brandon explained, the tribe began receiving flak from outside religious communities, especially Christians. Brandon did not go into detail about what aspects of their ceremonies were offensive to these Catholic observers, but since then, the community only allows visitors for Harvest and Christmas celebrations. Likewise, at Taos Pueblo, visitors are allowed to view the Corn Dance, but its meaning and significance are left to the imaginations of observers. This secrecy is merely a means to protect what is sacred about each respective community's identity; it is a respectable flex of the sovereign tribal muscle to both promote and withhold.

With regards to cultural production, many people concern themselves with the authenticity of a product. Knowing that the hyper individualism of the twenty-century has produced countless self-made men, including those who claim Indian heritage or cultural connection and then exploit it, gives many pause. These self-made men often harbor a romanticized perspective of Native culture and identity, and if a writer or an artist, they create and produce from their understanding of Native custom, branding it "authentic." As Jace Weaver identifies, many non-Natives are concerned with authenticity, while several American Indians

identify with their tribal cultures without much conscious effort. Weaver pinpoints a “seemingly constant, essentializing attempt by some activists and intellectuals to define ‘Indianness’ while the majority of Indians live their lives as if such definitions were largely irrelevant, living out their own Indianness without a great deal of worry about such contestations over identity. Few concern themselves with the delicate gymnastics of authenticity” (Weaver 4). Instead, Native peoples exhibit sovereignty over their identity by simply existing, aware and appreciative of their inherited tribal culture and simultaneously very much apart of the post-contact communities to which they belong

One such example of Native identity sovereignty can be found in the letter correspondence between Leslie Marmon Silko and James Wright (1978-1980), which was published as *The Delicacy and Strength of Lace* in 1985. Silko is known for brilliantly constructing an essential text to the Native American literary cannon while Wright is highly esteemed and impressively awarded for his poetry. Both writers naturally express their own self-determining identification process through the letters. Beginning with formal introductions and growing into a more familiar friendship, the two writers spend most of their conversation negotiating how much of the most intimate nuances of their individual identities they will share.

Wright begins their friendship after reading and becoming familiar with Silko’s work. He opens, “Dear Mrs. Silko, I trust you wont mind hearing from a stranger” (3). This first interaction establishes Wrights appreciation for Silko’s beloved novel, *Ceremony*, making him sound somewhat like a fan-boy, admiring her from afar: “About three summers ago I heard you read some stories and poems at that national poetry conference in Michigan. At that time I realized, like everybody else who was present, that your reading brought us all into the presence of something truly remarkable” (3). She responds to his kindness with, “Dear Mr. Wright, Your letter came to me at a time when I needed it most” (4); she does not yet identify what “time” she is referring to, but is truly grateful to hear from such an esteemed poet. They go on in this formal

manner, addressing one another as Mr. and Mrs. and discussing their careers. However, this formality does not last; Silko breaks it by only her second letter to Wright.

She begins, “I just fed the rooster a blackened banana I found in the refrigerator. He has been losing his yellowish collar feathers lately, and I’m afraid it might be that he isn’t getting enough to eat. But I suppose it could be his meanness too” (6). As she shares the stories of her pet rooster, she unfolds a family history with the bird, and in doing so she exposes her personality and unique identity. In the same letter, Silko warns him, “I never know what will happen when I write a letter. Certain persons bring out certain things in me” (7). And so buds a friendship that will continue between distant miles, contexts, and experiences. For a while, the pair communicates regarding writing projects and avoiding too much personal information. Louis Owens calls this timid space “transcultural,” which is “always vulnerable, easily penetrated, and in endless flux, and within this instability lies its vitality” (Owens 33). In the transcultural or frontier space between two unacquainted individuals, Silko continues to orient her openness and promptly sends Wright poetry and short stories that all have some connection to Laguna. Once again, their intimate interactions exemplify the necessary negotiation of how much information to share about one’s personal identity or experience. What’s more, each individual who is deeply connected to a specific communal experience must consider their storytelling a reflection of their community at large. They must be sensitive to sharing too much or too intimate of details; But, like Weaver points out, Silko seems entirely comfortable with her identity as both a Native American storyteller and a friend to James Wright, and she engages his friendship through narrative.

Silko begins sharing the ancient and still present ceremony of storytelling by intimating the details of a film project she was working on in the late seventies. She engages in self-determined cultural production of her pueblo by fashioning the stories of the people for a larger audience. In Jacquelyn Kilpatrick’s estimation, “Film is more than the instrument of a

representation; it is also the object of representation. It is not a reflection or a refraction of the 'real'; instead, it is like a photograph of mirrored reflection of a painted image" (Kilpatrick xv). Silko identifies film's advantage over oral or even written description. Capturing the exact scene or details of a setting on film allows for an accuracy that Silko says is not found in traditional oral Laguna stories. In her letter, she reveals, "Laguna narratives are very lean because so much of the stories are shared knowledge—certainly descriptions of the river and the river willows are *not* included in the narratives because it is assumed the listeners already know the river and the willows. So with a wonderful cinematographer, I hope to bring the stories out in a manner most faithful to the heart of the Laguna storyteller" (24-5). Through film, Silko makes a conscious effort to create stories that are a hybrid of the Laguna oral tradition and her own love for rich description. Through writing, She gives life to Laguna stories by surrounding the "lean" narrative with her ability to richly describe place and landscape.

Her decision is an example of identity sovereignty; she has the right to share cultural memory while adding to it, making it more accessible to a wider audience. "In a strange sort of way," she says, "the film project is an experiment in translation—bringing the land—the hills, the arroyos, the boulders, the cottonwoods in October—to the people unfamiliar with it, because after all, the stories grow out of this land as much as we see ourselves as having emerged from the land there" (24). Her desire to fully make use of identity sovereignty by exposing details of Laguna for a wider audience, through both production and publication, opens the letter correspondence to a discussion of landscape and its power over identity. In several places, Silko expresses regret for her disconnection from Laguna's landscape and her need to use memory as a "way of re-making that place" (28). It seems this discussion of place's effect on identity revitalizes Wright's deep connection to place. He says, "I can see, looking through the work that I have done, that our discussions of the relation between people and landscapes is very much at the heart of it. (When you love a place, really and almost hopelessly love it, I think you love it even for its signs of

disaster, just as you come to realize how you love the particular irregularities and even scars on some person's face" (32). For a brief moment in the transcultural correspondence, Wright gives in to his letter, allowing it to be reflective and descriptive and truthful. The poet responds to Silko's openness and begins sharing a bit of his own identity. In future letters he tells of his regrets regarding his estranged son, and the two share in the disappointment they associate with parenthood. In a true moment of transparency, Wright apologizes saying, "Leslie, I am not telling you all this in despair, and I ask you to forgive me for laying out my worst pain to you. I just wanted somehow to tell you that I understand how you feel about your children" (64). Their once formal relationship continues to grow to a level of connectedness and transparency as they progressively address each other with "My dear,".

It is their connectedness to a home place—Silko's home in Tucson and Wright's New York residence—that allowed their correspondence to continue with ease. As explored above, so much of their discussions and storytelling rose from the landscape they called home. However, as professors and touring authors, both Silko and Wright lived a vigorously mobile life. Silko accepted teaching positions in Washington and Oregon while Wright traveled through Europe with his wife Annie. This period of the letter correspondence, a period of placelessness, effects the letters, which become less grounded, brief, less driven by narrative. They spend time apologizing for their brevity or lack of time to write. Silko writes, "Dear Jim, In case the letter I sent yesterday doesn't reach Toulouse in time, I'm sending this to Delaware, hoping someone there will kindly forward it. I don't know what arrangements you make for your mail when you go abroad" (36). And he responds on a postcard reproduction of Jon Vermeer's "Young Woman Reading a Letter" sometime later with, "Dear Leslie, I just received here in Amsterdam the letter you sent to Delaware. Now our real *home* address is 529 East 89th Street, New York, N.Y. 100828. But I've received your letter in Toulouse okay. I think I wrote you from England" (40).

Despite the brevity of letters and the insurmountable distance and movement from place to place, the two writers often attempt becoming oriented in place wherever they may be.

Wright explains, “Dear Leslie, The small city of Bruges in Belgium is off by itself, away from Brussels, still some miles from the sea” (44). This small seaport Wright discovers becomes increasingly more important for the writers’ relationship. In Bruges, he finds a lively undercurrent of lace-making that is a deeply influential part of local culture. There, he purchases a piece of lace for Silko and sends it to her.

Sometimes, I wonder about things like lace, things that human beings make with their own hands, things that aren’t much help as shelter from the elements or against war and other kinds of brutality. Lace was obviously no help to the Belgians during two horrifying invasions in this century. Nevertheless, the art continues to survive the craftsmen weaving away with the finest precision over the woofs and spools. (45)

The art of lacemaking is very much situated in place, leaving the people of Belgium to entertain what may seem a frivolous art because it is deeply founded in the place’s identity. Likewise, Silko’s art of storytelling is deeply founded in Laguna, and will die hard. She illustrates this in quite the illuminating passage:

“What it all means is that it is imperative to keep up with the latest stories, and it is imperative as well to listen to Grandma in case she recalls a very old story...because in the scheme of things every story that is remembered has at least some reassurances for you. It is a powerful force and one which must be watched carefully to make sure that persons don’t use it destructively” (69)

At Laguna, Silko is inundated with the stories of her people, which she carries throughout her experiences, interactions, and career. With those stories, though, she admits to a great responsibility. In other passages, she stands in wonder at the influence of words, “just simple

words and how deeply we can touch each other with them” (74). Yet, she acknowledges that her words must not be used imprecisely or without care. Her stories, the shared stories of the Laguna Pueblo, should not flippantly be thrown about, but must be protected, shared when and with whom they are necessary. She says, “language is the most abused of all human abilities or traits” (74). Though she does not attempt to set herself as a pure example of a storyteller to emulate, she recognizes the power of her own words—whether those written in a letter or published in a novel. And she practices a sovereign right to carefully share herself and her culture—the make-up of her identity—with a friend.

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Heartlines

Introduction

Gilbert Suazo, Taos Pueblo tribal elder, said something I can hardly forget: “We all live in the same basket.” He was discussing the friendly competition between the north and south sides of Taos Pueblo. But I have taken this statement and applied it as a refrain for my experience here in Taos. On a hike along the south Rio Grand Gorge, I realized much of the landscape is woven—textured by complexity and detail. One section of the walk is an arid, rocky desert; the next is lush with wildflowers; next, is a thick sagebrush field; then, whitewaters below. Historically, Taos has been marked as a place where three dominant cultures—including Pueblo, Hispanic, and White—have intersected. Those cultural currents, woven together, have formed the town’s mixed identity. This fascinates tourists like me. We flock to taste the variety the town has to offer. We populate the plaza, nose through galleries and museums, and pound the dusty Pueblo roads. I must face my position in this varied landscape as a tourist who came to “gain understanding,” as I said when Gil put me on the spot, asking why I decided to visit Taos.

Though I hope to avoid being “that girl” with the giant DSLR and outfits only appropriate for a safari, I will admit to several touristy moments: On the square, I shopped for postcards and ice cream. At museums, I nodded and groaned in affirmation. At Acoma, I bought jewelry and took pictures for Instagram. In Albuquerque, my friends posed for photos in front of the Breaking Bad house. In Old Town, I examined tacky wolf t-shirts and Day of the Dead garb. I listened to live music and sang and danced along with “Quando, Quando, Quando.”

Despite those obnoxiously touristy expressions, there were also moments of complete groundedness. If only for a bit, I engaged a reality of place or people by removing illusory guises of representation often found in tourist hot spots. I caught glimpses of towns and their inhabitants

as they would be if there was mass exodus of all gentrifiers; as if it were just another small, forgotten place—only of interest to those whose mothers and boyfriends are residents.

These particular reality-checks were mostly experienced when a person or place revealed itself, not as I romanticized it would be, but as it was. An old couple, the mountain, an artist petitioned for eye contact, and my role as tourist shifted to friend, pilgrim, child. The following stories expose my most surprising interactions with New Mexico's vast and intricately woven basket.

I. Sitting in the 8th Pew Back, June 15, 2014

Winnie May must be in her mid-sixties. She sports dark, black curls that sit high atop her head. She wears glasses with a thick floral rim, and her nails are long and fuchsia pink. Her Bible is the size of my head.

Simultaneously, she carries herself with a class and grace the other church women could not compete with. Her husband followed behind her; I don't think he said but three words to me. He looked, and smiled, and listened.

I was introduced to Winnie May by the blonde-bobbed pianist, Ellen, who also attended Oklahoma Baptist University. Ellen and I connected immediately because I mentioned Oklahoma, she mentioned Shawnee, I lit up. *KaRip!* There you have it.

“Miss Winnie. This is Leah. She's an Oklahoma girl,” Ellen said.

“Oh! Is that right, uhuh? I grew up in Anadarko. My dad was Kiowa. My mom's from the village out here.”

Then we began to talk, really talk.

Her husband was a student at the Albuquerque Indian School, for which there is currently an exhibit in the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center. On Saturday, I walked through that exhibit, and Sunday I sat next to an artifact. Winnie May and I reminisced about (and simultaneously longed for) Oklahoma; discussed her past and my heritage; mourned the loss of her father, Charlie; considered her partial alienation from other Taos Puebloans for attending church outside the village.

We really talked.

And then we sang old hymns.

II. Pilgrimage

I nearly drained the battery of my cell phone to help locate the Luhan house, where artists, expatriates, and women of the 20s sought purification and a great American myth. Our car arrived in late afternoon, just as high sun begins to tip in the direction of the westward mountains. Something hung heavy.

I think it was silence.

We were a considerable ways from the main stretch of town, so the clamor of tourists like me decrescendoed to a faint and distant memory. There, a few unkempt adobe houses lined a drive, and open patio doors revealed a conference room full with quiet listeners. We walked further, looking for somewhere we could explore without upsetting the place. Around the corner, behind a wall, my slightly elevated shoes slipping between cracks of uneven stone pavement, we spotted the unexpectedly quaint Mabel Dodge Luhan house. The doors and windows were open, allowing Satie's *Trois Gymnopede*—or Debussy or Gurlitt—to seep through the walls and out to

the open spaces of a large patio. Oversized birdhouses formed a ghetto of mourning doves; a couple more walked the pavement with me, pecking at the cracks. To the east, one giant oak was hollowed out by the faithful productivity of female worker bees. I imaged the queen softly dancing in her hive.

A hostess met us with brochures about the place. I weaved from room to room. The inn was booked full with guests, so we were asked to only explore the original kitchen, dining hall, living room, and rainbow room, where a toddler and his grandmother napped in an easy chair. The woman hushed me as my feet creaked the old wood flooring. I whispered an apology, but I sat with them for a few minutes, taking in the view from the low hanging windows.

The brochure offered a brief walking tour of the areas we were allowed to visit. Under a section labeled “The Living Room,” there is a suggestion—only a sentence. It reads, “Looking out the small east windows, you will see the boundary fence for Taos Pueblo and, further out, the white cross painted by Georgia O’Keefe during her stay here.” Our group of five university students became frustrated by what was hidden—an object we, in fact, could *not* see from the east windows. Our hostess recalled simple walking directions to the white cross, and unbeknownst to us, we began a pilgrimage.

At the beginning, there is a faded sign, marked “La Morada...” Then, a large wooden cross, painted black. Unable to see the sign’s lettering, and uncertain of the translation of these Spanish words, we began our walk toward a structure in the distance. I lied when I told the others I could see the cross just as plain as they claimed to. Along the way, fourteen crosses outlined in stone—somewhat resembling overgrown graves—lined the long dirt path that cut through what must have been pueblo roads. My imagination let me to assume these hidden passageways led to Blue Lake and a greater truth, but I was not allowed on them. The woman back at the house warned that we stay on our designated path; otherwise, we risked being arrested by tribal police.

After a quarter mile walk, we arrived at the sun-faded and chipped, white cross as it swayed in the forceful winds. We were closer to the North mountain base than I imagined I would ever get. This clearing at the end of the dirt road must have previously been used to facilitate religious seekers. But it was abandoned, nearly collapsed, neglected by people but nurtured by the desert. For the first time in this woven town, I was nowhere near tourist culture. I realized I had just experienced the remnants of a dead attraction.

Here, people left symbols of themselves at the base of the dancing cross—an ivory rosary, a ponytail holder, a handkerchief. They erected alters of stone, and hung strips of blood-red fabric all around. Flags were strung between two fence posts. Written on them were several different languages, their prayers flapping in the wind.

My own prayers began to escape me, surprise me. *I am grateful for the mountains, the wind, the rocks, and this shaky cross.*

I took snapshots of the scene, but could not capture all the feeling.

We began our trek back to an overheated car. Back over the dirt pueblo roads. Back around numerous sage bushes. Back down from 14. Back to black. Back to the plaza. Back to a hotel room.

Later, our phones illuminated what we did not know: The fourteen crosses represented the stages of Jesus' journey to crucifixion. Tourists were encouraged to meditate on the darkness of their sins while near the first black cross. At each stage, moving always toward purification, one should remember Jesus' last days and earthly experiences. Finally, at the white cross, one should offer their thanks and a relic of their spiritual journey.

I had not done this.

Instead, I had walked, complained of wearing the wrong shoes and lied about seeing the end. And the dusty, disorganized pilgrimage to the white cross jilted my expectations. But from that place, my prayers emerged.

Notes

1. The Luhan house's information is slightly off. O'Keefe did not physically paint either the black or white crosses. Instead, the artist used the black cross as a model for a painting, entitled, "Black Cross, New Mexico" (1929).

2. La Morada de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe is registered as a historic site. It is said to receive 1.2 million visitors each year.

III. Heartline in Thunder // Gary

"What is your medium?" I asked.

"These are prints," he said.

"What did you say your signature was?"

"The red arrowhead and bandanna. They represent the Acoma's connection to the Earth. And our fight to remain alive."

Gary looked me square in the eyes.

"Everything you encounter has a heartline. The wind you feel now. The sun. The dust that has blown into your eyes"

THE WITNESS' ROLE: SENTIMENTAL RESPONSES TO INKLE AND YARICO

Introduction

In *The Spectator's* retelling of the popular Inkle and Yarico tale, Richard Steele creates his own frame narrative. In it, he casts a refined English woman, Arietta, through whom readers hear the tragic account of a Carib woman and an English man who meet one another when the Englishman trades in the New World. The unlikely pair—one dark-skinned the other fair and both incapable of speaking a common language—fall into a brief affair. Yarico protected Inkle from the dangers of his ignorance in a region he knew little of, and Inkle promised Yarico's safe return to England where she would be dressed in the finest silks and jewels. However, in an abrupt turn of events, Inkle is more compelled by monetary gain than Yarico's affections and their unborn child. Instead, the English trader sells Yarico into slavery, thinking he could earn twice as much by trading a pregnant woman.

Upon sharing Yarico's story, Arietta's room of guests leave with tears in their eyes.

There is no doubting that a well-told story can move the affections of any engaged audience. But Steele's 1711 retelling is not the only example of an audience's emotional reaction to Yarico's demise. Most renown was George Colman's 1787 opera, and subsequent performances, which was considered to be the most widely performed play of its time.¹⁴

In Frank Felsenstein's book, *English Trader Indian Maid*, he parcels a number of the surviving versions of this popular tale, saying, "the recurrence throughout the eighteenth century of the tale of Inkle and Yarico suggests that it existed as a vibrant oral narrative."¹⁵ This story was read, retold, and performed so prolifically that it is hard to ignore the widespread circulation of this tale in the eighteenth century. Today, the story is best preserved in written narrative form, but one can

¹⁴ Felsenstein Frank, *English Trader Indian Maid: Representing Gender, Race, and Slavery in the New World* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1999), 165

¹⁵ Felsenstein, *English Trader Indian Maid*, 3

imagine the buzz that this Pocahontas prototype created among English men and women who were curious about the nuances of the New World.

Of all the contact narratives published and circulated at the time, why did this particular story capture audiences' attention? In this essay, I will show the relationship between audience and text that is informed by eighteenth century sentimentalism, which produces emotional reactions after a witness observes tragedy. To do so, I will focus on both delivery and responses to the Inkle and Yarico tale. I argue that using an eighteenth century sentimentalist lens, storytellers, and audiences actively participate in imagining Yarico's distress, as well as Inkle's decision to enslave her, with each utterance of this popular tale.

In *Reading Columbus*, Margarita Zamora shows the value of examining the historical context of accounts that intend to capture and construct an image of the New World for European audiences. Specifically, Zamora's collection of essays focuses on Columbus's exploratory and discovery narratives, as well as contemporaneous readings and interpretations of them. Still, this essay owes a great deal to the introduction in *Reading Columbus*, which posits the value of reading context. Zamora writes:

For just as every text arises in a particular context and ... specific ... circumstances, so do readings of that text. And although we cannot reconstruct those contexts in their complexity and specificity or approach writing and reading as if they were only responses to circumstances, to disregard the contexts within which texts become meaningful is to ignore an important aspect of how writing and reading help make history. The results of an interpretation that treats the mediated character of a text's mode of existence as a central focus of the analysis can be unsettling to those who feel most comfortable with the positivist assumption that the past can be essentially reconstituted in the present

through the study of documentary sources. Yet if mediation is not taken into account one runs the risk of producing a flat, static picture of historical writing.¹⁶

Granted, Zamora would emphatically reject attempts to essentialize the eighteenth century European worldview; however, the telling and retelling of the Inkle and Yarico story, which is often framed with a European reader or narrator, suggests a reason to consider the context within which the story is situated. Zamora outlines ways to carefully read the context of any historical account when she sets parameters for her own exegesis of Columbus' letters. She focuses on the "rhetorical rather than referential" qualities of writing. In other words, she is keen to the writer's approach to contributing to a respective discourse. Finally, she considers the readers for whom a text is written as well as the circumstances surrounding the act of writing. In my own reading of the Inkle and Yarico tale, as is published in *The Spectator* and acted in Coleman's opera, I will implement Zamora's approach to understanding the context within which the popularized eighteenth century account is circulated.

Eighteenth Century Sentimentalism: The Writer's Circumstances

Richard Steele, editor of *The Spectator*, identifies how vivaciously gossips and talkers of trade spread the Inkle and Yarico account, and as if to preserve the culture's interest in the story, he creates an entirely new set of characters, never before seen in other versions of the tale.¹⁷ The framing narrative is told from the perspective of one of Arietta's visitors, who observes the manner in which Arietta recounts the Inkle and Yarico tale and the reactions within the room. The guest is unnamed, as if to suggest this man could be anyone from England's most civil company. Steele establishes the universality of conquest discourse in the eighteenth century. In fact, I imagine readers of *The Spectator* often gathered in rooms just like Arietta's to read from the magazine and engage current topics. The very word "spectator," suggests readers are encouraged to gaze on subject matter found within the magazine's pages. They are invited to inspect,

¹⁶ Zamora, Margarita, *Reading Columbus*, (Berkeley, 1993); 3

¹⁷ Although Richard Steele made the account famous among English men and women, Steele adapts the tale from a Richard Ligon's *History of the Island of Barbados*. (Felsenstein 2)

speculate, and observe the spectacle that the periodical provides.¹⁸ Yarico and Inkle's account was indeed a spectacle at which many audiences were prone to gawk. Likewise, the unnamed guest gawks at the spectacle in Arietta's account.

The guest describes meeting Arietta through a friend, who introduced them only because the guest was a "civil, inoffensive man"¹⁹ Arietta's virtuous and blameless character goes before her, and she attracts the most ethical company. Steel insists on establishing Arietta's virtue so audiences may read the Yarico and Inkle tale as a morality tale. In fact, *The Spectator* is known to be the most "widely read series of prose moral essays in English."²⁰ Inkle and Yarico's tale, then, is situated in the magazine as one that readers should head with self-reflection. And Arietta's virtue is key because she becomes the audience's barometer for correct response to the account. In fact, Peter Hulme suggests that the popularity of accounts of the New World are directly influenced by the social status of the narrator of that account. Hulme offers an example of European receptions of the Colonial project that involved Dr. Alvarez Chanca. The doctor sailed with Columbus to Guadeloupe, and reported an eyewitness account of cannibalism. This account enforced European insistence of barbarism in the New World, though the accuracy of the account is questionable. Hulme emphasizes that Chanca's societal position determined the acceptance of his story; because he was a medical doctor, Europeans undoubtedly believed he was qualified "with the kind of knowledge and approach that mark[ed] him as an appropriate forerunner of the objective historian"²¹ (Hulme 41). Similarly, Richard Steele's retelling of the Inkle and Yarico account is framed by Arietta's narration, which he does a great deal to establish as a credible source.

¹⁸ "spectator, n." OED Online. September 2014. Oxford University Press.

¹⁹ Felsenstein, *English Trader Indian Maid*, 83

²⁰ Felsenstein, *English Trader Indian Maid*, 2

²¹ Hulme, Peter, "Postcolonial Theory and Early America: An Approach from the Caribbean." In *Possible Pasts: Becoming Colonial in Early America 2000*, edited by Robert Bair St. George, 33-48. Ithica and London: Cornell University Press, 2000.

With two guests in her parlor—the unnamed narrator and another gentleman—the young woman begins her story in response to their discussion of “constancy in love,” which the unnamed guest identifies as a common discourse among this company. The emboldened gentleman tells of the *Ephesian Matron*, a story often cited to depict female fickleness in love. In the story, a young woman mourns the loss of her lover, a soldier killed in battle. She weeps in his tomb until one of the late soldier’s comrades joins her in the tomb, encouraging her to stop crying and, at the very least, have something to eat. The Matron repays his kindness with intimate affections. Distracted from her mourning, she takes to bed with the soldier, forgetting her late lover almost as quickly as she fell in love with him. Arietta will not allow such demeaning talk about her gender in her presence.²² To counter, she passionately recalls the Yarico and Inkle story as an example of *male* fickleness in love. The unnamed guest recalls:

Arietta seemed to regard this piece of raillery [the *Ephesian Matron* tale] as an outrage done to her sex, as indeed I have always observed that women, whether out of a nicer regard to their honour, or what other reason I cannot tell, are more sensibly touched with those general aspersions,²³ which are cast upon their sex, than men are by what is said of theirs.²⁴

The unnamed narrator distinguishes between male and female emotional reactions to damaging slander that is spoken against their respective genders. His comment about the vehement strength of female’s emotional responses to gossip becomes an important aside after Arietta has fully recounted Yarico and Inkle’s contact, blissful romance, and final trader-slave relationship.

In order to show how Steele’s readers are intricately involved in the text, Arietta engages her audience’s attention with small references to themselves. She rails against the misogynist gentleman by highlighting Inkle’s pseudo-masculine qualities. And she plays to common

²² Felsenstein, *English Trader Indian Maid*, 289-292

²³ “aspersions, n.” OED Online. December 2014. Oxford University Press. Definition: 6. A damaging report; a charge that tarnishes the reputation; a calumny, slander, false insinuation. This word also has connotations of casting, or sprinkling, slander like water.

²⁴ Felsenstein, *English Trader Indian Maid*, 83

preconceptions eighteenth century readers had for Native populations, by emphasizing their savagery as she speaks. To begin, Arietta is quite disdainful towards Inkle, lashing out on the male sex altogether. She casts him, “Our adventurer... the third son of an eminent citizen, who had taken particular care to instill into his mind an early love of gain.”²⁵ Some scholars²⁶ have suggested, Inkle’s name to be a reference to his meticulous mathematical skill—his ability to calculate the cost and benefit of any transaction, which would be useful for the third born son who will not receive any of his father’s inheritance. Simultaneously, Arietta is sure to describe Inkle as a common man, one who could be sitting among her audience of guests or even like those reading the magazine: “Inkle had a person every way agreeable, a ruddy vigour in his countenance, strength in his limbs, with ringlets of fair hair loosely flowing on his shoulders.”²⁷ In contrast, she sets Yarico up as a prelapsarian goddess, bearing fruits and fulfilling Inkle’s need for shelter against the perceived aggressive Natives. By emphasizing the exaggerated gender roles of the characters—Yarico as a symbol of domesticity and Inkle as a symbol for masculine strength—the narrator addresses eighteenth century constructions of gendered responsibilities. Her story will show that though Yarico fulfilled her role as a good woman, she is carelessly mistreated by Inkle’s failure to uphold standards of male virtue.

She continues to engage her audience’s connections to the story when the tale quickly unravels Yarico and Inkle’s relationship. Inkle, having established with his lover a language of their own, tells Yarico of his plans to take her home with him and lavish on her fine English gifts befitting a lady.

How happy he should be to have her in his country, where she could be clothed in such silks as his waistcoat was made of, and be carried in houses drawn by horses, without being exposed to wind or weather. All this he promised her the enjoyment of, without

²⁵ Felsenstein, *English Trader Indian Maid*, 87

²⁶ Felsenstein, *English Trader Indian Maid*, 81. Felsenstein notes the origins and implications of Inkle’s name.

²⁷ Felsenstein, *English Trader Indian Maid*, 87

such fears and alarms as they were there tormented with. In this tender correspondence these lovers lived for several months...²⁸

Arietta's guests, as well as readers of *The Spectacle*, would identify with the notion of English luxury. They are not unfamiliar with fine silks or horse carriages, and as English citizens, they become apart of the text—enveloped in the material items they benefit from through trade. The story becomes transcontinental by confronting English society's use of traded goods and disillusioned safety in Europe.

Finally arriving at Yarico's demise, Arietta recalls, "Mr. *Thomas Inkle*, now coming into *English* territories, began seriously to reflect upon his loss of time."²⁹ For the first time in Arietta's narrative, she asserts Inkle's full name, giving him the distinguished title of a gentleman, again, as if he could be among her audience. Feeling he has lost time due to his sexual affair, Arietta continues, Inkle "sold Yarico to a *Barbadian* merchant" even after the Native woman tells Inkle she is carrying his child. This information encouraged Inkle to sell her for a higher price, for she carries a second commoditized body within her womb. After Arietta finishes her tale, the unnamed guest recalls being "touched with this story" so much that he says he "left the room with tears in [his] eyes." Considering his earlier comments about the female propensity to exert stronger emotions in railleries against their gender, the male narrator implies he has been affected by her story in a way that transcends the performance of his gender, which would normally remain stoic and unmoved. Instead, his tears signal the kind of reactions readers of *The Spectacle* may have also experienced.

Eighteenth century readers were taught to read by dragging their index finger along the page, following closely each word as it appeared.³⁰ Even experienced or mature, adult readers,

²⁸ Felsenstein, *English Trader Indian Maid*, 88

²⁹ Felsenstein, *English Trader Indian Maid*, 88

³⁰ I draw this idea from a talk Ed Folsom gave at Oklahoma State University in the Fall of 2014. I sat in a seminar on Whitman and Dickinson as we discussed what nineteenth century scholars call "the erotics of reading." Of course, Folsom discussed the role of readers in terms of Walt Whitman's texts, yet I find several parallels for the use of this essay.

practiced physically engaging with a text through pointing. As a reader's finger touched a word, that word signified a particular meaning as well as a connotation. The reader not only understood the words on the page, but he or she physically connected to the words. Furthermore, eighteenth century readers often mouthed or spoke (out loud) words on a page; it is only recently that readers practice silent reading. As one mouths the arrogant words of Inkle, who suggests he would be happier with a more "English" Yarico, dressed in fine silks, the reader joins Inkle's propensity to indulge at the expense of distant others. When the reader runs her finger across the words that condemn Yarico to slavery, he or she too is involved in the process of the slave trade. This level of connection to text brings readers closer to emotionally experiencing the text's moral lesson, which *The Spectator* attempts asserting. Though the most obvious injustice in the text is the denial of Yarico's selfhood, Steel steers clear of making his version about slavery.

Felsenstein points out Richard Steele may have been involved in the slave trade, causing him to omit Arietta's detailed account of Yarico's entrapment, leaving her pregnancy and commoditization for only a few sentences at the periodical's end.³¹ Steele's refusal to address slavery, favoring the framework of gender in his version of the tale, is a reflection of English concerns with the early abolitionist movement. Specifically, many Europeans who subscribed to the movement were also deeply influenced by the luxuries afforded them through trade and inhumane conquest of the New World. However, as Felsenstein shows, this tale increases in its ability to accommodate the abolitionist movement across time.

The appropriation of the tale by the antislavery lobby during the eighteenth century allowed writers to present in literary form a compelling (if inevitably sanitized and sentimentalized) critique of the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade and of British attitudes as the preeminent slaving nation.³² Therefore, many readers physically and emotionally engaged a text that deeply confronted their national identity and personal aptitude for true Christian justice.

³¹ Felsenstein, *English Trader Indian Maid*, 14

³² Felsenstein, *English Trader Indian Maid*, 14

The Witness' Response

Not only are Richard Steele's characters' emotionally stirred, but also the widespread circulation of the story—told and retold in parlors like Arietta's—suggests many readers also experienced an emotional connection to the story. I will not attempt to speculate about the sincerity of emotional reactions to the tale, but I will show how their reactions are in keeping with contemporaneous theories of morality. In the eighteenth century, a person's moral fiber was most important for his or her status among peers. In fact, Patricia Spacks notes that eighteenth century English audiences were steeped in a Christian tradition where “the moral structure [was] of [a] God-dominated universe: a structure formed on principles of justice, providing an orderly system of rewards and punishments in this life or the next”.³³ In the god-dominated universe, there is good and evil; right and wrong; appropriate and shameful; god-honoring and heresy. And a person's choice between each of these would have monetary, societal, and eternal consequences. Witnesses of the Inkle and Yarico tale undoubtedly recognized the plot's³⁴ pull between right and wrong, which Spacks calls an example of the characters' “virtue in distress.” Witnesses would sympathize with the emotional struggle Inkle faces when he is forced to either stand against his love of gain and marry Yarico or sell his lover into slavery. From this ideological apparatus, the audience's emotional response to Inkle's choice directly relates to their moral standing. The emotional outbursts from Arietta and her guests, then, are the appropriate response to Inkle's immoral betrayal of Yarico, and the guests' tears imply he is of upright moral character.

³³ Spacks, Patricia Meyer, *Desire and Truth: Functions of Plot in Eighteenth-Century English Novels* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990). This book tracks tropes of the sentimental novel, but it is especially useful for my purposes as I grapple with contemporaneous theories and philosophies that influenced the eighteenth century mind, and thereby, actions.

³⁴ *Desire and Truth* focuses on plot in the sentimental novel as a means to leverage emotional response from readers. In her introduction, she argues that truth is conveyed through plot elements. “I propose that plots of eighteenth-century novels illuminate the history, politics, and manners of their age not only by embodying prevailing ideology but, often, by reshaping ideology closer to the heart's desire” (6).

In his essay that grapples with eighteenth century moral philosophers, David Marshall takes this foundational understanding of sentimentalism a step further.³⁵ He posits that Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1750) requires more than just tears from audiences who witness tragic storylines. In fact, Marshall would place Smith's theory in line with Shakespeare's theatre mundi, where all the world is a stage and people are both actors and spectators in the events of life. According to Marshall, Smith's theory suggests that spectators imagine themselves in the position of someone whose virtue is in distress. But unlike Smith's contemporaries—Hume, Hobbes, Kames, and Du Bos— Smith believed that sympathy is not the product of a universal set of feelings yielded by all in distress. In other words, individuals experience different emotional responses even if they experience the same event.

Essentially, Marshall argues that Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* does not suppose that just because a person witnesses a man in distress, he or she will immediately feel all his or her feeling. In Smith's *Theory*, Marshall extracts an idea no other scholar has identified before: through imagination, the spectator can picture himself or herself as the one in pain or in distress. Moreover, the persons imagining must also envision they are also a spectacle, on display and watched by an audience. They must imagine that the audience watching them will also have an emotional response to their distress, and this response directly correlates with the audience's moral character. The question the imaginer must ask, then, is "How would I want a viewer to respond to me if I were in such distress?" Thus, the correct response is full of sympathy and benevolence.

As such, emotional responses to the Inkle and Yarico tale are much more than a representation of a person's moral fiber; rather, they are moments of performance. The unnamed guest acts the way he *believes* he should, having placed himself in Yarico or Inkle's position. Thus, the widespread circulation of this tale—whether in epistolary, periodical, or theatrical

³⁵ Marshall, David, "Adam Smith and the Theatricality of Moral Sentiments," *Critical Inquiry* 10, no. 4 (1984): 592-613.

form—is a test of propriety the narrator gives his or her listeners. The test is designed to show how audiences morally act and emotionally react when they imagine themselves in distress. For Marshall, this is what “provided the standard eighteenth-century explanation for the pleasure which audiences derived from watching tragedies” (Marshall 601). Known to be a tragic story, it is no coincidence the Inkle and Yarico tale appears in theatrical form. Audiences witnessed the opera from its open in 1787 through its run in New York in 1806. And they attended to test their own moral character as they participated in the spectacle.

Colman’s Opera: An Abolitionist Text

Over the years of its popular run, the opera was used to reveal various injustices of European and American involvement in international slave trade, respectively. Thus, Yarico takes several ethnic identities across time. In the late 1700s in England, Yarico is a woman from the Caribbean sold to a man from Barbados. Later, Yarico is depicted as Native American, showing the destructive force of British exploration and colonization in North America. In the 1806 New York stage play, Mrs. Inchbald writes an introduction entitled “Remarks.” She acknowledges Yarico’s ethnic changes across time, calling them a “fault” of the opera, but she holds that this minor discrepancy does not outweigh the effectiveness of the moral tale.

A fault more important, is—that the scene, at the commencement of the opera, instead of Africa, is placed in America. It would undoubtedly have been a quick passage, to have crossed a fourth part of the western glob, during the interval between the first and second acts; still, as the hero and heroine of the drama were compelled to go to sea—imagination, with but little more exertion, might have given them a fair wind as well from the coast whence slaves are *really* brought, as from a shore where no such traffic is held.³⁶

³⁶ Inchbald, Mrs., “Remarks,” *Inkle and Yarico, an Opera, In Three Acts By G. Colman, the Younger. As Performed at the Theatres, Covent-Garden, Hay-Market, and New-York.* (New York: D. Longworth at the Dramatic Repository, Shakespeare-Gallery, 1806), Early American Imprints, Series II: Shaw Shoemaker, 1801-1819.

In this quotation, one can see Mrs. Inchbald's American presumptions about slaves' origins, as she suggests Yarico must be African rather than Native America or Carib. Though Mrs. Inchbald considers Yarico's ethnic fluidity a problem, I believe it is the character's ability to morph that makes her most effective. To use Marshall's language, Yarico is merely representative—an actor, a spectacle—designed to allow audiences to imagine themselves in her position. Abandoning specificity, Yarico's story as an effect on all audiences who engage it, regardless of the witness' geographical context. Mrs. Inchbald, does, however, note the major success of the opera in New York, arguing that in “theatrical exhibitions...the doctrine is most effectually inculcated, where exhortation is the most required—the resorts of the gay, the idol, and the dissipated.”³⁷ Furthermore, she writes, “it is one of those plays which is independent of time, of place, or of circumstance, for its value. It was popular before the subject of the abolition of the slave-trade was popular. It has the peculiar honor of preceding that great question.”³⁸ Toward the end of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century, the opera takes shape to benefit the abolitionist movements in both Britain and America.

³⁷ Inchbald “Remarks,” 3.

³⁸ Inchbald “Remarks,” 3

Figure 1

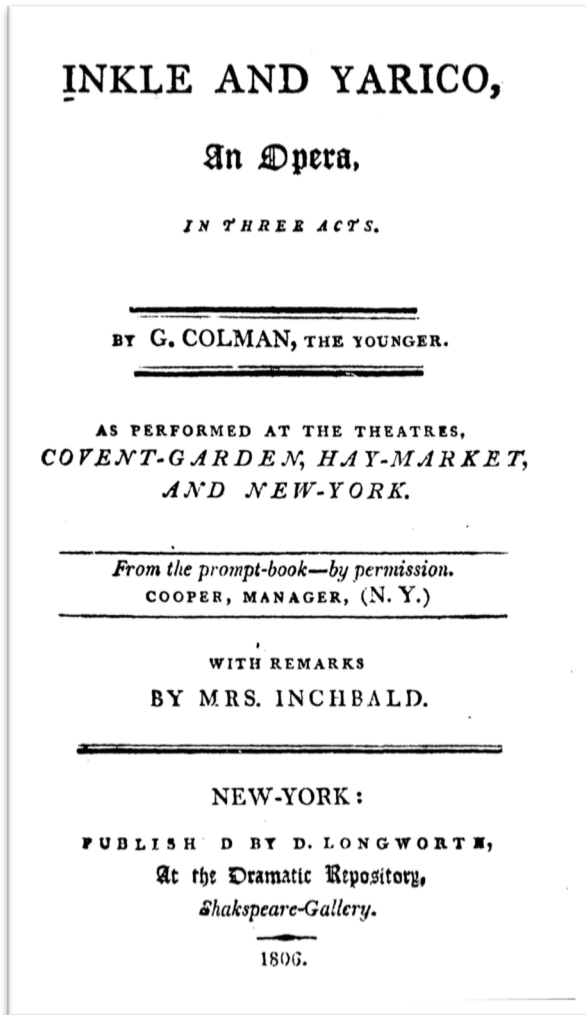


Figure 1: 1806 Title Page; Colman, George, *Inkle and Yarico, an Opera, In Three Acts By G. Colman, the Younger. As Performed at the Theatres, Covent-Garden, Hay-Market, and New-York.* (New York: D. Longworth at the Dramatic Repository, Shakspeare-Gallery, 1806), Early American Imprints, Series II: Shaw Shoemaker, 1801-1819

Figure 2

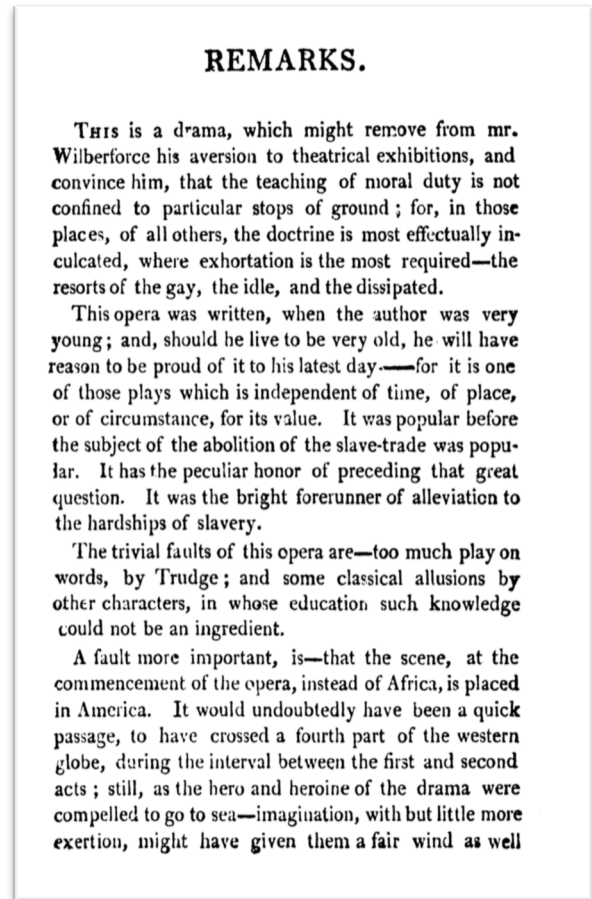


Figure 2: Inchbald, Mrs., “Remarks,” *Inkle and Yarico, an Opera, In Three Acts By G. Colman, the Younger. As Performed at the Theatres, Covent-Garden, Hay-Market, and New-York.* (New York: D. Longworth at the Dramatic Repository, Shakspeare-Gallery, 1806), Early American Imprints, Series II: Shaw Shoemaker, 1801-1819.

The Oral Tale Becomes True Spectacle: Music, Lights and Physical Bodies

According to Felsenstein, the musical elements of the opera were below par; despite this, the show still received fabulous reviews and remained on stage at Covent Garden for several

seasons.³⁹ Even in this theatrical setting, with poorly composed music, many confirm the story brought tears to the audience's eyes with each final curtain.⁴⁰ The opera was certain timely for the growing abolitionist movement, which often appropriated tropes of eighteenth century sentimentalism to construct emotional appeals for emancipation of slavery in Great Britain and America as well as the movement encouraging tradesmen to consider more human avenues for revenue.^{41 42}

In order to affect audience's sentiments, the opera had to capture audience's attention from the beginning. Often, the audience's first impression of any theatrical performance is the theatre's set. In a quotation from *Charleston State in the Eighteenth Century*, Felsenstein notes the theatrical set depicted an "American forest," "Yarico's cave, hung with the skins of wild beasts," as well as scenes from the ship "in full sail" and the calm sea.⁴³ By incorporating visual elements, theatrical audiences automatically feel incorporated into the action of the opera they have come to see. Thus, Colman's opera, which takes more liberty to reflect the racial nuances found in the traditional tale, implicates its audience's guilt by visually connecting them to a setting.⁴⁴ Through the operatic chorus, Colman heralds the opera's purpose; the Prologue calls all observers to action, asking the audience to judge the text's ability to affect its audience:

³⁹ Felsenstein, *English Trader Indian Maid*, 167

⁴⁰ Felsenstein, *English Trader Indian Maid*, 169

⁴¹ Hulme, Peter "From 1837 there had been an Aborigines Protection Society in London, a Christian philanthropic movement to protect the aborigines of the world from the ravages of civilization" (39)

⁴² See Brycchan Carey, "British Abolitionists," *Brycchan Carey*, February 2001, <http://www.brycchancarey.com/index.htm>. Of particular interest to me is Carey's research on Ignatius Sancho (1729-1780), who is "said to have been born a slave on a ship crossing the Atlantic from Africa to the West Indies." He is known to be the first African to vote in a British election, and he was often called "the extraordinary Negro." According to Brycchan, Sancho became "a symbol of the humanity of Africans." In Sancho's letters, he uses emotional appeals to Laurence Sterne to encourage the preacher's abolitionist plight and to affect the frequency with which England's parlors and congregations heard Sterne's abolition stance.

⁴³ Felsenstein, *English Trader Indian Maid*, p.

⁴⁴ The following explication of the text is taken from the 1787 version of the text, which Felsenstein published in *English Trader Indian Maid*. This version, Felsenstein says, is the most useful because it is likely the version most often acted. Additionally, Felsenstein added Colman's original prologue, making his edition the most complete of all the published versions.

'Gaisnt vice and folly constant war to wage;
To teach young poets the first rule of art,
To charm and fancy and improve the heart.
Awhile with patience yet attention bend!
Your sentence a brief hour or two suspend!
Then judge impartially our little cause
We dread your censure! but ask no applause.⁴⁵

In the chorus's appeal, the theatrical audience is invited to participate in evaluating, not only the opera, but also themselves. The audience should determine whether they have "improved the heart" through the vehicle of the performance and their emotional response to it. As a conspicuously abolitionist opera, audiences confronted their notions of fair work, trade, and profit. Thus, the play depicts a brutally racist Inkle and shipmates who are and driven by monetary gain. The opera shows the barbarity of perpetuating the slave trade, whether in action or rhetoric.

Upon arriving in the New World, the company of shipmates discusses their motives for journeying across the Atlantic. Inkle's uncle, Mr. Medium, notes Inkle's "confounded composure"⁴⁶ as the trader first laid eyes on the hazardous American landscape. Mr. Medium notes the New World is composed of beasts, forests, lions, jackals, crocodiles, and women. Inkle responds to his uncle's concern, saying he is merely reflecting on the company's purpose in the new continent. When asked to specifically explain their purpose, Inkle says, "Travelling, uncle, was always intended for improvement; and improvement is advantage; and advantage is profit, and profit is gain. Which in the travelling translation of a trader, means, that you should gain every advantage of improving your profit" (177). Inkle's examination of the land, then, is in effort to determine where and how he can exploit the landscape and its contents.

⁴⁵ Felsenstein, *English Trader Indian Maid*, 173-74

⁴⁶ Felsenstein, *English Trader Indian Maid*, 176

Inkle's closest companion and servant, Trudge, also shares the trader's sentiment that the New World is ripe with opportunity to earn profit. Thus, upon arrival, Inkle and Trudge set out to explore the new landscape. Trudge is chased by black "savages" out of the forest and back toward the shore. Because of the natives' hostility, the company becomes discouraged with their ability to profit from the land at all. In dismay, Trudge sings "Last Valentine's Day," a song that not only depicts Native peoples as savage and dangerous, but also lacks hope, suggesting the company will never achieve profit in the menacing landscape. Trudge sings, "*In London, What gay chop-house signs in the street! / But the only sign here is of nothing to eat.*"⁴⁷ It is worth noting that Native hostility is an indication that European traders, like Inkle and Trudge, have already contacted tribes. The Natives have already prepared a defense for the impending pillaging they come to expect from European traders. Inkle calls Trudge a coward for fearing the new world, and the trader encourages the servant to follow his lead into the forest. They find a dwelling in which Inkle first sees the sleeping Yarico, who he objectifies, believing she is "as beautiful as an angel!"⁴⁸ When she awakens, Yarico realizes the men's impending danger without a guide to defend them against her warring tribe. Yarico defies the Englishmen's notions of appropriate gendered behavior. Yarico, with her servant Wowski, volunteers to be Inkle and Trudge's escort through the challenging terrain; the dark lady shelters them in her cave and provides food for nourishment. To the eighteenth century audience, Yarico both validates and challenges presuppositions about the New world. She asks,

"And do you know the danger that surrounds you here? Our woods are filled with beasts of prey—my countrymen too—(yet, I think they couldn't find the heart)—might kill you.—It would be a pity if you fell in their way—I think I should weep if you cam to any harm" (185).

After her promise to protect them, Inkle and Trudge's assumptions about Native savagery begin to dissipate. The opera specifies that Yarico speaks English, a discovery that surprises the

⁴⁷ Felsenstein, *English Trader Indian Maid*, 182

⁴⁸ Felsenstein, *English Trader Indian Maid*, 184

two traders. Soon, a romantic relationship between Inkle and Yarico ensues and in a duet between the lovers, Yarico rises to the status of noble savage—capable of expressing deep sentiments, in fluent English, and with such artistic poise. Yarico sings, and she appears educated, virtuous, and worldly beyond both Inkle and the audience’s preconceptions of Native civility, or lack thereof:

Yarico: Ah! no, I could follow, and sail the world over,

Nor think of my grot, when I look at my lover;

...

Inkle: O say then my true love, we never will sunder,

Nor shrink from the tempest, nor dread the big thunder:

Whilst constant, we’ll laugh at all changes of weather,

And journey all over the world both together (187)

According to Marshall’s theory that sentimental literature’s aims for audiences to imagine they are the spectacle in distress, witnesses of the Colman opera already imagine the tension Yarico senses in this moment. Her first duet with Inkle is a crucial opportunity to dissipate his prejudices about her Native identity, her otherness; for instance, Yarico’s must challenge theories that non-whites were savage, primitive, irresponsible land owners, and uneducated enough to believe slavery was a happy fate. Singing of her desire to travel with Inkle suggests she is more like Inkle than not. She has an expansive conception of the global world that encourages a kind of wanderlust, which may have surprised Inkle as well as audiences of the opera.

Opposite Yarico is another aboriginal female named Wowski, Yarico’s handmaiden. Her function in the opera is to mirror Yarico’s romance with Inkle, as she and Trudge fall under each other’s charms. Wowski differs from Yarico, though, proving less refined and educated. Her dialogue in the opera is limited to grunts and grammatically incorrect phrases. In fact, in a song to Trudge, Wowski admits her promiscuous exploits with other men, but she assures Trudge that he is the only one for him. Trudge’s attraction to her remains steady, and the couple contrasts nicely as a second example of interracial relationships between English men and non-white women.

While Inkle and Trudge navigate their romantic escapades, the other shipmates discover an opportunity for profit—through the slave trade. One man says, “No, no; we want slaves. A terrible dearth of ‘em in Barbadoes, lately! But your dingy passengers for money. Give me a vessel like a collier, where all the lading tumbles out as black as my hat” (192). Having discovered their opportunity for gain in the New World, the shipmates rally all the men’s efforts to participate in slave trade. Of course, their decision directly conflicts with Inkle and Trudge’s romantic escapades in the land. As the tale goes, Inkle and Trudge are faced with a choice to either sell their Carib lovers for a profit or to continue in defiant relationship with them. In a series of ill-fated lovers’ duets and arias, the traders and their dark lovers bemoan the position they are in. And Yarico proves her pure love in an aria that reflects on the couple’s short but passionate romance, singing:

Our grotto was the sweetest place!
The bending boughs, with fragrance blowing,
Would check the brook’s impetuous pace,
Which murmur’d to be stoppe’d from flowing.
‘Twas there we met, and gaz’d our fill:
Ah! think on this, and love me still.

Citing *General Magazine I (1787): 161*, Felsenstein shows this particular song brought tears to many prominent audience members’ eyes—including Robert Burns, William Hazlitt, and Charles Lamb.⁴⁹ “Even the sternest of critics succumbed to the charm of Mrs. [Elizabeth] Kemble, [Colman’s original 1787 Yarico] whose ‘sweet and pathetic tones and . . . exquisite plaintiveness

⁴⁹ Felsenstein, *English Trader Indian Maid*, 33. Felsenstein includes a poem by Robert Burns that he wrote after seeing the opera. The poem reads:

Kemble, thou cur’st my unbelief
Of Moses and his rod:
At Yarico’s Sweet notes of grief
The rocks with *tears* had flow’d.

... brought tears into the eyes of the whole audience.”⁵⁰ Undoubtedly, audiences are not only moved because of Kemble’s acting ability, but also they are steeped in the sentimental tradition and thereby expect to be emotionally effected by the opera. Witnesses of the spectacle are required to show their moral uprightness by commiserating with Yarico’s plight—most often, their sentimentalism-induced tears. Yarico’s aria continues:

Tw’as then my bosom first knew fear,
—Fear to an Indian made a stranger—
The war-song, arrows, hatchet, spear,
All warn’d me of my lover’s danger.
For him did cares my bosom fill:—
Ah! think on this, and love me still.

For him, by day, with care conceal’d,
To search for food I climb’d the mountain;
And when the night no form reveal’d,
Jocund we sought the bubbling fountain.
Then, then would joy my bosom fill;
Ah! think on this and love me still.

Yarico’s repetitive refrain, “think on this and love me still” places Inkle in her debt because she underwent such extremes to ensure his safety. This aria proves her virtuous character, which induced her tender care for Inkle. Simultaneously, as Yarico thinks on her own investment in the relationship, the dark lady recalls the “care” for Inkle that she harbors in her *bosom*, which is the physical place in sentimentalist rhetoric where emotions spring forth. While the mind harbors reason and knowledge, the heart or chest is home to sentiment. Thus, the audience’s

⁵⁰ Felsenstein, *English Trader Indian Maid*, 168-9

ability to imagine the sentiments of Yarico's heart is primary to their correct response to the tragedy.

Just as the audience imagines they are like Yarico, a spectacle on stage, witnesses must also imagine they are in Inkle's unique position. After Yarico pleads with Inkle for their love, he responds with an essential statement that characterizes eighteenth century European perspective on the outside world; certainly, audience members would relate to Inkle's expressed sentiment when he says:

Hear me, Yarico. My countrymen and yours differ as much in minds as in complexions. We were not born to live in woods and caves—to seek subsistence by pursuing beasts—We Christians, girl, hunt money; a thing unknown to you—But, here, 'tis money which brings us ease, plenty, command, power, every thing; and, of course, happiness. You are the bar to my attaining this; therefore 'tis necessary for my good—and which, I think, you value—” (224).

The audience is suspended in Inkle's uncertainty as he struggles to decide which side of morality he falls.

Figure 3



Figure 3: Elizabeth Kemble in Romeo and Juliette, Creative Commons. Kemble was a favorite actress of her time. In the London Times' Review of opening night, Mrs. Kemble was thought to have "commanded general approbation in the character of Yarico. Her face and manner of acting are particularly happy for the character, and visibly operated on the feelings of the audience."⁵¹

⁵¹ "Story of Inkle and Yarico." *The Times* Issue 814. (London, England, 1787).

Will Yarico crumble under the weight of English progress, Inkle's foreshadowed intention to profit, in the New World? Unlike the version printed in *The Spectator*, Colman's reimagining of the Inkle and Yarico tale ends happily. In a surprising turn, the opera ends in marriage between the lovers. Inkle overcomes his English disposition to love and pursue monetary gain, which he admits was imposed upon him by his father, like religious doctrine. As I grew up, he'd [Inkle's father] prove—and by example—were I in want, I might e'en starve, for what the world cared for their neighbours; why then should I care for the world? Men now lived for themselves. These were his doctrines; then, sir, what would you say, should I, in spite of habit, precept, education, fly in my father's face, and spurn his councils?⁵²

In the opera's final scenes, witnesses are forced to imagine and sympathize with the tension Inkle genuinely feels. He is pulled between a desire to respect all his father taught him—the principles his entire homeland adopts and operates under. This scene perfectly illustrates what Spacks calls "virtue in distress," through which a person either proves or shames his own moral character. In this distressed moment, Inkle denies his father's (and fatherland's) "ill found precept,"

...[which] too long has steeled my breast—but still 'tis vulnerable—this trial was too much—Nature, 'gainst habit combating within me, has penetrated to my heart; a heart, I own long callus to the feelings of sensibility; but now it bleeds—and bleeds for my poor Yarico. Oh, let me clasp her to it, while 'tis glowing and mingle tears of love and penitence."⁵³

It is interesting to note Inkle's implied reservations as he utters this stirring testimony of his love. He says his heart is "still vulnerable," and he must "combat" his own habit. Inkle does not flippantly choose moral correctness; rather, he wrestles with himself when deciding Yarico's fate.

⁵² Felsenstein, *English Trader Indian Maid*, 228

⁵³ Felsenstein, *English Trader Indian Maid*, 228

In the tradition of sentimentalism, Inkle's moral uprightness produces uncontrollable emotions. Thus, his heart races and in a moment of exhaustion from the distress, the organ bleeds. And just as audiences of the opera were reported to do, his eyes produce tears. By crying, he proves his good character in both word and action.

Likewise, the audience's heart bleeds for Yarico, recognizing the Hobbsian battle between Nature and true civility that Inkle alludes to above.⁵⁴ The audience understands their part in the spectacle. They are participants in validating the precepts that sent Inkle on a voyage meant to pillage, buy, and sell in hopes of gaining. They are like Yarico—enslaved by the European predisposition to gain by any ill means—as well as they are like Inkle—torn between tradition and moral uprightness. As an abolitionist piece, the opera confronts audience members at the foundation of their conception of Europe's purpose in the broadening transatlantic world. The complex feelings each audience member must have experienced cannot be thoroughly described. Just as Marshall explained, witnesses of distress cannot be expected to experience “fellow feeling,” or the same exact reaction to a spectacle across individuals. Certainly, one witness may harbor a very different reaction to the tale than the person in the opera house's neighboring seat. Likewise, Arietta's guests in *The Spectacle* express different reactions to Yarico's demise. The unnamed guest cannot contain his emotions while the other gentleman laughs at the thought of Inkle's revenge on the *Ephesian* Matron. Regardless of the various reactions, one thing is sure; audiences of the opera were moved to uproarious applause. For the length of the opera, they were summoned to use their greater sensibilities to imagine their own moral response to Inkle and Yarico's unique situation.

The day following the show's 1787 open, *The London Times*' reporter wrote a complementary review of the opera. The punctuation of his review is as follows:

⁵⁴ Hobbes, Thomas, *Norton Anthology*, “Thomas Hobbes from ‘Leviathan’” Hobbes writes in Chapter 13 of *Leviathan* that there are three natural or innate “principal causes of quarrel. First, competitions; secondly, diffidence; thirdly, glory. The first maketh men invade for gain; the second for safety; and the third for reputation”

The dialogue of this piece is managed with much judgment, and abounds with many noble and liberal *sentiments*. These had a very striking effect on the audience, who received them with the most *hearty* approbation, and the piece was given out for this evening, with general applause.⁵⁵ (emphasis added)

This reviewer uses the language of eighteenth century sentimentalism to describe the audience's response at Covent Garden that evening. Not only does he suggest the audience's sentiments were stirred, but in a play of words, the reviewer suggests the location at which witnesses were emotionally struck. Saying witnesses received the performance with "the most *hearty*" praise, he suggests audience members were affected by the Inkle and Yarico tale in the most sentimental location: their hearts.

⁵⁵ "Story of Inkle and Yarico." *The Times* Issue 814. (London, England, 1787).

VITA

Leah Ashley Palmer

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Thesis: BETWEEN SILENT LINES: WALT WHITMAN IMAGINES POSSIBLE FUTURES FOR MINORITIES IN POST-EMANCIPATION AMERICA

Major Field: MA, English Literature

Biographical: I am a passionate and creative literacy sponsor who is committed to serving my community by empowering others through the English language. My research specializes in American Literature, with an emphasis on transcultural or multiethnic narratives.

Education: BA, English

Completed the requirements for the Master of Arts in English at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May 2015.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor Arts in English at Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, Oklahoma in May 2013.

Experience:

Teaching Assistant; 1213 Composition (Spring 2015) and 1113 Composition (Fall 2014)

Writing Center Consultant; Highland Park Elementary School, 5th grade State Writing Test project, Stillwater, Oklahoma (Spring 2015); Oklahoma WONDERtorium of Stillwater, Oklahoma, "Write On!" project coordinator (Spring 2013-Spring 2015); Stillwater High School Writing Center Co-Program Coordinator Spring 2013-Fall 2014); Peer Tutoring and Literacy Sponsorship, Oklahoma State University Writing Center, Stillwater, Oklahoma (Fall 2013-present)

Professional Memberships:

Oklahoma State University Writing Center Leadership Team (2014-present); English Graduate Student Association, Oklahoma State University (2013-present); South Central Writing Center Association member (2013-present); Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society (2012-present); Mortar Board Member (2012-present)