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EDITOR'S NOTE

The written word has this wonderful capability of preserving ideas in time and connecting those ideas with willing readers. This very connection allows humanity to relate, to understand worlds once foreign, and to explore perspectives previously out of reach. IDIOM ensures that we continue to preserve written ideas, bringing the works of undergraduate students beyond the classroom and into the hands of readers.

As students of literature, we must ask important questions, carefully analyze, and extract meaning from texts. By communicating our interpretations, we afford new perspectives and, in turn, expand each other's understanding of the works we read. We often discuss our insights about literary works, but rarely do we read each other's writing. However, these external observations sometimes offer as much complexity and substance as the piece itself. IDIOM seeks to share the ideas that students have so generously contributed. We invite our readers into the captivating worlds of the authors so that they can ask important questions, carefully analyze, and extract their own meaning. Initially, the students wrote these essays only for professors and teaching assistants. But such outstanding work deserves a much wider readership.

I owe sincere gratitude to the many wonderful people who made this journal possible. Thank you to the IDIOM Associate Editors: Alanna Carolan, Sean Morgado, Caroline Noël, Jovana Pajović, Kudakwashe Simbi, and Veronica Spada. I must also thank our Managing Editor, Stephanie Higham, our Assistant Editor-in-Chief, Elaine Lee, and our Deputy Editor-in-Chief, Tahsin Tabeya Amin Maansib. I appreciate all of the productive discussions, insightful feedback, and commitment from each of them during the making of this volume. A special thanks to Dr. Vikki Visvis for offering her advice and support. Her guidance helps equip us each year with the skills necessary for the selection and editing process. A special thank you also goes out to this year's Academic Advisor, Professor Misha Teramura, who was once an Editor-in-Chief of IDIOM himself back in his undergraduate years. We appreciate the time and effort you put into proofreading each paper and providing your

professional feedback. I also want to acknowledge Becky Caunce, whose creativity and talent ensure that our journal's aesthetic is just as brilliant as the work within. Thanks also to our sponsors for their generous support of our journal. And to our authors, who have brought this sixteenth volume to life. Thank you for inspiring and enlightening each reader who experiences your marvelous work.

Inside this journal, these essays will illuminate how literary works can redefine genres and conventions, and how structure and technique can represent human relations. They will introduce you to innovative interpretations of diction and devices, encourage you to explore the very idea of legibility, and ask you to investigate how you interpret those different from yourself. These ideas are now preserved in this journal, for you to engage with and be inspired by at any time. We hope you take away some reflections of your own from the works shared here in IDIOM's Volume Sixteen.

JULIA MIHEVC, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
April 2022

(REAL)IZING THE I IN TEMPORALITY: THE SUBJECTIVE INTERPLAY OF TIME IN "THE RUNAWAY" AND "THE PROGRESS OF LOVE"

Cristiana Da Costa

This comparative essay explores the structural representations of human temporality and perception that underlie Sinclair Ross' realist short story, "The Runaway" and Alice Munro's experimental-realist short story, "The Progress of Love." As works that embrace a realist sensibility to represent the complex dynamic between the self and experience, this essay aims to refute debates that contest realism's verisimilitude—suggesting its continual capacity to represent the abstract at its strictest and most experimental manifestations. Employing the structural narratology of literary critic Gérard Genette, this essay uncovers the function of both texts' distinctive narrative chronology, perspective and focalization in their representations of the "subjective interplay of time"—where the past, present and psyche structure time in an individualized manner. Furthermore, in mapping how Ross and Munro diverge in their applications of chronological linearity, first-person narration, and internal focalization, this essay highlights the pertinence of both texts' distinctive realist approaches to the construction of a nuanced evocation of human experience. Identifying how Munro's experimental approach to realism familiarizes time's unconscious contemporaneity and subjectivity in the mind, this essay also considers the function of Ross' conventional approach to realism; defamiliarizing the mind's cognizance to time and elucidating how memory, perception and personal disposition become entwined within temporal experience. Through a temporally-focused narratological analysis, this essay ultimately argues that the comprehensive portrait of time's subjective interplay offered by "The Progress of Love" and "The Runaway" derives from the interdependence of both realist and experimental-realist narrative discourses. It is through this, she argues, that literary endeavours that seek to emulate the real can fully evoke its reality—enabling the unconsciously felt and consciously understood aspects of experience to be considered as equally critical components of the human condition.

Cristiana would like to acknowledge and thank IDIOM editors Elaine Lee, Sean Morgado and Caroline Noël for their insightful suggestions and encouragement throughout the editing process for this essay, written for ENG252: Introduction to Canadian Literature.

The question of the suitable literary form to represent the metaphysical is a recurring theme in the disputes surrounding realism. Modern critics cite both its strict techniques of linearity and its emphasis on "the surface materiality of things" as restricting language's capacity to represent the complexity of experience—suggesting a necessary departure from literary convention to represent the "myriad impressions" that shape experience (Morris 16). In Alice Munro's experimental-realist work "The Progress of Love" and in Sinclair Ross' realist work "The Runaway," both writers refute the discourse surrounding their genre by at once complying with and revolting against its conventions as they render the human experience of time. Through non-sequential narrative structure, both stories dissolve the temporal boundaries imposed between instances of the past and those immediately receptive to the human consciousness, portraying the simultaneity of 'time' as past and present encounter and inform one another. Furthermore, the subjective language and stylistic techniques of their narrators' first-person retrospections communicate their impressionistic nature. While diverging in their separate uses of omniscient and limited narration, both Ross and Munro elevate the supporting character to thematic device through perspective. By contrasting character perceptions, both writers explore the universality of time's receptivity to the psyche, contesting the existence of a single objective temporal reality. Ultimately, this essay will emphasize the necessity of both realist and experimental techniques to represent the subjective interplay of temporal experiences—where past, present, and the psyche work in tandem to construct, order, and understand time in an individualized manner. Through this temporally focused analysis, I will argue that "The Progress of Love" and "The Runaway" exemplify realism's capacity to render the complexity of human experience, suggesting realism's continual standing as both a mimetic and insightful literary mode of expression.

To explicate this interplay between narration, perspective, and syntax in Ross and Munro's representations of temporal experience, this essay employs the narratology of Gérard Genette's *Narrative Discourse*. In his discussions of narrative order and duration, Genette defines the discrepancies between a narrative's hypothetical sequence of events ("fabula-time") and their succession in the narrative discourse as "anachronies" (Genette 35). Anachronies that evoke an event after its occurrence in the fabula-time or before the story's present ("narrative-time") are designated as "analepses" (40). These analepses are characterized by their "reach"—

how far they extend into the story's 'past'—and their "extent"—how much the narrative's 'telling' ("discourse-time") is devoted to them (48). Furthermore, he conceptualizes secondary-character narrators who exist within the narrative as "intra-diegetic" and protagonist narrators as "autodiegetic" (51, 228). The limitations of the narrator's perspective depend on the "focalization," where "internal focalization" reflects the characters' consciousness (the "focalizer") and "external focalization" is limited to character action without revealing inner thought (193). Focalization can alternate within a narrative, and is characterized by its mood. A narrative's mood is determined by its modality of "distance"—use of diction that affirms more or less of the focalized object, and modality of "perspective"—the different point of view through which the focalized object or action is represented (162). These elements of mood, voice, order, and duration converge to shape a text's narrative discourse, informing what and how a text can 'represent.' Applied to Munro's and Ross' narratives, a Gennetian framework elucidates the aspects of temporal experience which are unveiled in both authors' distinctive use of realist techniques.

"The Progress of Love" follows the recollections of middle-aged woman Fame, as she confronts her working-class childhood, her past and present understandings of the lives of those around her, and her mother's death. The short story is a work of realism that embraces literary experimentation in its departure from linear chronology. Consisting of a coalescence of the narrator's memories in autodiegetic analepses, the absence of a definitive fabula-time in the story echoes the unconscious irregularity of lived experience as it is ushered into the conscious mind through recollection. This interplay of time is established in the narrator's memory of discovering her mother's death: "[she] got a call at work, and it was [her] father. This was not long after [she] was divorced and started in the real-estate office" (Munro 570). Here, the syntax's irregular chronology mirrors the mind's concatenation of lived time. Specifically, the "divorc[e]" and "star[t] in the real-estate office" are critical moments occurring at varying points in time. Yet, as both evoke the sense of instability in Fame's present, they characterize the unsettling "call at work" being recalled, mirroring how non-sequential moments of the past unconsciously coincide within a single recollection, defying linear chronology.

This interchange between past and present is heightened in the preceding lines, where the news of the death triggers an involuntary memory of "[the narrator's] mother in her black straw hat setting off down the lane" (Munro 571). This is followed by a temporally ambiguous analepsis, where Fame remembers how "[her] father took [the death] hard. He never got used to living alone, he said. He went into the Netterfield Country Home quite willingly," an event that follows the mother's death yet precedes the narrative-time (571). Here, three points in time operate within a single thought—the mother's death, a quotidian memory of her, and the father's bereavement. The absence of temporal indicators captures the mind's indifference to chronology, where past circumstances evoked by the present operate as one interchanging constituent of time. The reach and extent of the anachronies further elucidates this indifference. While the "setting off down the lane" occupies a greater reach into time and a smaller extent of the story than the father's mourning, both appear concurrently and occupy a similar duration in the discourse-time. This verbalizes the unsystematic coexistence of elements of time in the mind; recollection of lived time is inherently indifferent to its 'actual' duration, chronology, or apparent significance. While continuing to align itself with Abrams's notion of realism's 'matter-of-fact' diction, the chronological and syntactical experimentation in "The Progress of Love" accommodates Munro's representation of the irregular superimposition of time in the mind (Abrams 260). However, similar representations are not limited to stark narrative experimentation.

In "The Runaway," a short story that follows an unnamed narrator and his family of prairie farmers, Ross balances temporal shifts with linear chronology to maintain a realist narrative structure—mirroring the 'everyday' perception of factual details and behaviour ubiquitous to realist fiction (Abrams 260–61; Morris 11). While this limits his capacity to explore unconscious temporal experience like Munro does, it enables Ross to represent the mind's cognizance of time's interplay. This is exemplified in the text's exposition where Luke Taylor, a wealthy proprietor, offers to sell the narrator's poorer family a team of promising Diamond horses. In reaction, the narrator remembers seeing how "all [of Taylor's horses] possessed a flawless beauty, a radiance of pride and spirit" that "when they pass[ed] you turned from what you were doing and stood motionless, transfixed" (Ross 370). Here, the description of the Diamonds' "flawless beauty," "radiance

of pride and spirit," and "transfix[ing]" effect in the analepsis are intangible and sublime; it is apparent that Ross' diction is not occupied with relating past sensory perception, but the experience of past perception itself, which is internalized and later recalled. This internalized perspective emerges when the narrator returns to the present in the fabula-time, describing the Diamonds' "black coats shining in the sun like polished metal; long rippling manes; imperious heads" (370). Here, Ross' alternating use of concrete and abstract diction reproduces the continuity of past experiences in the realized present. The use of literal language in "black coats shining in the sun" and "long rippling manes" relates immediate sensory perception, yet the simile in "like polished metal" and personification in "imperious heads" indicate the experience's entwinement with an internalized abstraction. By highlighting the narrator's inability to disconnect the Diamonds' present state from their past idealization, Ross' figurative language points to the inseparability of past perspective from that of the present. Specifically, Ross' boundaries between present and past enable him to familiarize this unconscious process of interplay Munro defamiliarizes in her experimentations with chronology. Moreover, turning to diction itself as a mode of representation, Ross amplifies Munro's exploration of time's simultaneity by situating it within the act of perception "as it seems" to the temporal mind, integral to the realist technique Abrams identifies (260).

Intrinsic to the irregular coexistence of time within the mind is the subjectivity of its process. Enveloping the reader into the psyche of its autodiegetic narrator, "The Progress of Love" uses internal focalization to reveal the impressionistic nature of temporal experience. In this framework, the self impinges on constituents of time and their structure, overlapping personal thought, memory, and sensory perception. This is evident when Fame, the narrator, reviews defining moments from her childhood. For instance, in the analepsis detailing her high-school entrance examinations, where she travels from her hometown in the countryside to the esteemed city in order to write her exam, Fame remembers how she "loved [the] rustling sheets of foolscap, the important silence, the big stone high-school building, all the old initials carved in the desks, darkened with varnish" (Munro 574). The concrete diction of "rustling," "old," and "darkened" establishes visual and auditory imagery that juxtapose the city school against Fame's rural hometown and infuses it with a prestigious and

unfamiliar atmosphere. Viewed in relation with the narrator's subjective language in "important" and "loved," Munro infuses Fame's memory with an enthusiastic voice, situating the experience within Fame's consciousness and establishing the inherent subjectivity in sensory perception.

Subjectivity continues to affect Fame's experience when she interrupts and interprets her own recollection:

> I wondered at it. And at myself [...]. I thought I was so clever, but I wasn't clever enough to understand the simplest thing. I didn't even understand that examinations didn't make any difference in my case. I wouldn't be going to high school. How could I? That was before there were school buses; you had to board in town. My parents didn't have the money [...]. And they didn't think of my life going in that direction [...] That was what they were waiting to tell me when I got the results of the examinations. (Munro 574)

When contrasted with the emotive tone of the testing day's analepsis, the practical tone and rhetorical question in Fame's introspection reveals how the present consciousness reorients lived time. As a recalled memory inherently elicits revaluation through a present lens, Fame's mature understanding of her childhood financial situation nullifies her youthful hopes—overshadowing the composition of the optimistic moment as it was initially perceived. This inevitable interchange between the lived past and the present consciousness during retrospection renders the only time that can be consciously retrieved as impressionistic, suggesting that the construction of experience and its temporality is entirely individual.

Ross' realist approach to first-person narration concretizes the interchange between time and the mind both outside of and within the narrator's psyche. While Munro's internal focalization transmutes the objects of perception through Fame's remembering mind, Ross' first-person narrator balances internal perceptions with external manifestations, capturing stimuli's gradual susceptibility to the mind's interpretation. When the team of Diamonds first show signs of their depreciation, the narrator views the situation through two modes of perception: It wasn't just four good steers against two balky Diamonds. It wasn't just a matter of someone getting the

better of him. It was that after all these years old Taylor should still be practicing fraud and trickery, still getting away with it, still prospering" (Ross 373). Here, the narrator offers an unequivocal perspective of the situation; there is an inherent irony in having to hire "four good steers"—an oxymoronic phrase—to replace ostentatious yet incompetent "balky Diamonds," and a subjective perspective of the situation where the past informs understanding; the deceptive seller previously and continually "prosper[s]" from such "fraud and trickery." The contrast of these two perspectives alongside the anaphora of "it wasn't just" emphasize the extent to which a situation's constituents and significance is informed by the experiences and disposition of its onlooker. For, the anaphora shows that despite the human mind's ability to recognize objects impartially, as perception filters through the psyche and entwines with the past experience it evokes, one's definitive interpretation of experience is inevitably personal. This instance in "The Runaway" also illustrates how Ross' more limited style of first-person narration is not necessarily reductive of the complexities that underlie the subjectivity of time, but reveals how the conscious mind coexists with and consults its own past to make sense of experience.

Moreover, this subjectivity extends beyond the mind of the primary focalizer. While "The Progress of Love" situates itself within Fame's mind, she interacts with a network of characters whose experiences both intersect and conflict with her memories. Through repetition in the form of internal dialogue and direct speech, Munro captures the universality of time's susceptibility to the human mind. Applying Genette's concepts of mood to Fame and her Aunt Beryl's separate impressions of Fame's grandmother's attempted suicide highlights their formal variations, uncovering the subjective interpretations of this same event. As told to Fame by her mother Marietta, the latter recalls how:

> Something looked wrong about her [mother], beyond the fact that she was standing on the chair and smiling in this queer, right way. Standing on an old chair with back rungs missing, which she had pulled out to the middle of the barn floor, where it teetered on the bumpy earth. There was a shadow on her neck. The shadow was a rope, a noose on the end of a rope that hung down from a beam overhead. (576)

The uncertainty of "something looked" establishes a restriction of perspective, deriving from the focalizer's innocence. The scene's defamiliarization through euphemisms expresses the restricted distance; there are no direct depictions of self-harm itself, but only sensory elements such as an "old chair with back rungs missing," "teeter[ing]," and the "noose" that evoke apprehension from an innocent child's distance. This further illustrates how Marietta's personal naïveté subjectively transmutes the elements and structure of the experience. The implications of the story's framing as both an intra-diegetic narrative and a memory adds an additional layer of subjectivity in Fame's transmutation of the scene. To elaborate, following the analepsis' completion, Fame's enigmatic descriptions of her mother's "puzzles you can't resist or solve" and the "poison which touched her" reflect Fame's understanding of the suicide attempt—suggesting the story's enigmatic atmosphere arises from its complex ambiguities, as both Marietta and Fame subjectively impinge upon it.

The shift in mood in Beryl's version of the story further illustrates the personal nature of the memory:

> [S]he could carry a joke too far, Mama could. One time, one time, she wanted to give Daddy a scare. He was supposed to be interested in some girl that kept coming around to the works [...]. And Mama went out to the barn and climbed on a chair and put a rope around her neck [...]. [S] omehow we all ended up in the barn [...] and there was Mama up on a chair preparing to give Daddy the fright of his life. She'd sent Marietta after him [...]. My eyes followed that rope up and up and I saw it was just hanging over the beam, just flung there—it wasn't tied at all! (583)

Beryl's subjectivity is twofold in her rendition, echoing both her frivolous and veracious nature. Munro's use of declarative sentences and concrete imagery affirms the objects of the situation in their entirety, reframing the situation with the minimized distance of Beryl's wit. However, the colloquial language, repetition, emotive function in "one time, one time" and concluding exclamatory sentences signify a dialogic idiolect that points to Beryl's subjective perspective. Specifically, Beryl's avoidance of the situation's gravity through levity in her impression immediately restructures the suicide attempt

as a lighthearted stunt. Viewed together, Fame's and Beryl's stories enhance, rather than minimize, the situations' ambiguity—illustrating the manifold nature of time. Through this, Munro rejects time as an empirical concept where truth can be derived from experience. Rather, she captures how temporal experience unleashes a multitude of 'truths' indicative of the individual disposition of the mind beholding it rather than an objective 'reality.'

In "The Runaway," Ross restricts the story's primary characters to the same situations within the diegetic storyline. As the text's omniscient first-person narrator provides internal and external focalizations of shared experience, the internal and direct speech reactions of Ross' characters provide insight into how the human mind's shapes and reconciles the multitude of 'truths' in time. This is pertinent in the aftermath of the destruction of Taylor's elaborate barn and his horses, where each primary character articulates their perspective on the experience. The narrators' mother sarcastically states that it would be "[b]etter for [Taylor] today if he had debts and half-a-section like the rest of us," where her ironic tone relates her dissatisfaction with the situation—an interpretation related to her prior class-based exploitation (Ross 380). Likewise, her mention of the proverb "[t]hough the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceedingly small" captures her religious view of the event as divine retribution (380). Comparatively, the father emphasizes the unjust death of "all of [the horses] but the team [Taylor] was driving and [his] own two no-good balky ones," although he also claims that "scores were settled" (380). Although the object of perception is the same for both actors, the minimized influence of past exploitation and emphasis on personal ethics in the father's interpretation enable Ross to highlight how variations in personal perspective alter 'time.'

The equivocal meaning behind the barn's destruction is further elevated through Ross' use of internal speech. By fusing the narrator and primary characters' thoughts, Ross captures how the mind consciously understands the ambivalence of experience. Speaking through his father, the narrator questions, "[w]hat kind of reckoning was it that exacted life and innocence for [Taylor]'s petty greed? Why, if it was retribution, had it struck so clumsily?" (380). While the narrator identifies that his mother's view of the divine retribution ("reckoning") and the father's view of the "exacted life" cannot coexist within the situation, the rhetorical question

enables him to accept this incongruity through a refusal to make rational sense of it—mirroring how the mind reconciles contradicting perspectives on the same situation as distinct facets of experience. Ultimately, Ross' use of discourse outlines the inexplicability of the dynamic relationship between the past, the present, and the self. As a realist, he emulates the human experience as it is understood and experienced, not to rationalize the incoherence of events; an impossibility in life as in art.

In both "The Runaway" and "The Progress of Love," the complexity of time is as pervasive as it is in extra-artistic experience. While Munro's experimentations with chronology and first-person focalization vocalize the contemporaneous and individualized structure of time in the mind, cooperation with linear narratives and realist objectivity familiarize the abstract and polyphonic elements of time as they are felt in everyday experience. It is only when viewed collectively that both texts can provide a comprehensive view of time, as it occupies a perpetual state of subjective interplay in the mind. The insight both texts provide ultimately suggest the continual pertinence of realism to understand abstract phenomena. Since embedded in the 'real' is both the experience immediately perceptive to the conscious mind and the intuitively felt layers of elusive sensory perception, to turn to literature for realism is to seek both a depiction of conscious and unconscious layers of experience. To do so, the literary landscape necessitates a form to construct what its counterparts can only evoke.

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WHAT WE TALK ABOUT WHEN WE TALK AT DINNER: HOW THE KITCHEN TABLE STAGES THE DEBATE ON BEING AN 'OTHER' IN AMERICA

Mailey Horner

Written for ENG365: Contemporary American Fiction, this essay investigates the cultural, spatial, and discursive function of the dinner table within the two American short stories, "What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank" by Nathan Englander and "Hell-Heaven" by Jhumpa Lahiri. By reading these stories comparatively, congruencies between the cultural function of the dinner table—particularly as a surface for the touching of the American and the foreign, and as a stage for the discourse incited through this touching—can be investigated. Both texts explore eating together as a way of constructing family, the importance of silence and subtext within dinner-time discussions, and the various ways that the dinner table stages a conflation between the American and the foreign. The discourses on and the negotiation of cultural belonging occur through this conflation being the point of contact between the table's symbolism of the American nuclear family, and the 'foreign' things spread upon it: Indian food, secrets, discourses on Judaism, and vestiges of various friends and family members. A comparative reading between these two texts further reveals the dinner table—as the primary place of American and foreign convergence within the home of the 'Other'—to therefore function as the main point of entry for America into the home of the 'Other,' America taking up a metaphorical seat at the dinner table. This invasion of America via the dinner table emphasizes the insidious way that melting-pot ideology is established within the private home of the other: through the four-chair dinner table built for the American nuclear family. This invasion additionally reveals the difficulty with which 'otherized' individuals might maintain a balance between their culture and the culture of America, without being reduced monolithically to foreign Americans.

Within the American home, the dinner table functions as a point of connection between cultural discourse and etiquette, a place of fluency where language and social norms converge. In "What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank" by Nathan Englander—inspired by the title and narrative of Raymond Carver's quintessential American short story "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love"—two Jewish couples gather around the table with a bottle of vodka for a ten-year reunion, while Jhumpa Lahiri's "Hell-Heaven" follows a Bengali family whose evolving relationship with an isolated Bengali student is shaped through shared experiences of dining and conversation. In both short stories, the surface of the dinner table stages the conflation of fluency in western social etiquette or 'Americanism,' and the 'foreign' matter placed upon its surface: discourses on Judaism, secrets, Indian food, and silence. The intersection between America and the 'Other' at the point of contact between the surface of the table and the thing upon it thus stages the tension between Western social etiquette, or 'Americanness,' and the norms of each household's 'foreignness,' allowing a new negotiation of cultural belonging to emerge.

In both stories, the dinner table acts as the hub of connection in America, the place where family and friends gather to dine and drink, a stage for debates and discourse on cultures that seem at odds with Americanness. In Englander's story, Lauren and Mark (Shoshana and Yerucham), Orthodox Jewish expatriates living in Israel, reunite with Deborah and her husband—the unnamed narrator—in their Floridian dining room after not having seen each other for ten years. Their debate on the Jewish American lifestyle begins before the party reaches the table: Mark critically examines the space around him from the vantage point of the kitchen, which acts as the beating heart of the house, while the hallway and window act as arteriole connections to the kitchen, from which the living room, dining room, and pool outside can be seen. The visible vastness of the American home gives Mark a basis upon which he frames his criticisms of the spatiality, or "vacuum" (Englander 2) of America as one in conflict with his pre-war Jewish lifestyle, built upon religion and ritual. He describes the American Floridian landscape as characterized by fragmentation ("Other sides of town. Wrong sides of the tracks. Space upon space." [2]) and excess, specifically mentioning the "supermarket, supermarket, adult bookstore, supermarket, supermarket, firing range" (2). The spatiality of the American home thus evokes Mark's criticisms of the American lifestyle, the antithesis of Mark's Jewish life, before they can reach the table.

"Hell-Heaven," set north-east of "What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank," is set in Boston, where an isolated Bengali student, Pranab, finds a home with Usha's family around their Formica kitchen table. After Pranab approaches Usha and her mother Aparna in the park one day, noticing they are also Bengali, Aparna invites Pranab to their table for afternoon tea, a neo-Victorian British-American tradition, only to serve him leftover curry and rice once realizing he had not eaten a Bengali meal in months. Aparna takes an immediate liking to Pranab and invites him to stay into the evening to meet Usha's father when he returns from work. In adulthood, the narrator Usha recalls how "after that [Pranab] showed up for dinner almost every night, occupying the fourth chair at our square Formica kitchen table, and becoming a part of our family in practice as well as in name" (Lahiri 2). The practice of eating together is important in many cultures in mediating who is 'family.' This practice, anthropologically referred to as *commensality*, initiates Pranab as a family member just as Usha's naming him 'Pranab Kaku' (meaning 'uncle') brings him into the family. Pranab becomes an older brother of sorts, filling the role of the second child that Aparna is incapable of conceiving while also filling out what is missing in the lives of each family member: for Aparna, someone to love; for Usha, someone to look up to and play with; and for the father, a son of sorts to whom he can offer advice. The four chairs around their Formica kitchen table create the quintessential image of the mid-century American nuclear family. While eating together and naming him 'uncle' brings Pranab into Usha's family, Pranab also metaphorically fills the empty space of the family by occupying the empty chair at Aparna's Formica kitchen table.

In both stories, the space of the kitchen table functions as a point of connection between family and friends, as well as a point of connection and tension between America and the 'Other'. In "Hell-Heaven," the fourth empty chair unites a family in the form of the nuclear American family, while the Formica table stages the debate of whether one can be simultaneously Bengali and American, just as the kitchen table in Englander's story stages the debate on whether one can be a devout Jew in America. The debate thus configures a threefold tension between the table itself, what is physically or metaphorically placed upon the table, and among the individuals surrounding the table. The discourse incited through this interaction symbolically illustrates the reach of America into the private lives of its residents. In the discourse produced through this point of convergence, the etiquette of

each culture seems at odds with 'the table of America,' which deepens the anxiety of how one can be Bengali or Jewish in America.

The anxiety produced with the discourse between the table and its resting objects is especially evident in "Hell-Heaven." What is placed upon the surface of the Formica table includes vestiges of Pranab: "a nearly finished pack of cigarettes, a newspaper, a piece of mail he had not bothered to open, a sweater he had taken off and forgotten in the course of his stay" (Lahiri 3); songs from old Hindi film's played on his reel-to-reel; passionate debates and playful combat between Pranab and Aparna; Bengali culture used to fill the void of the empty chair, the deafening silence of Usha's father, and eventually—to Aparna's dismay—Pranab's new girlfriend, Deborah. Aparna is never fond of Deborah not only because she takes Pranab, Aparna's one true source of happiness and the man she is secretly in love with, but because Deborah's presence at the dinner table threatens to strip Pranab of his culture and represents, to Aparna, the inability to live another culture in America, as well as the foreign invasion of America into her home. If Deborah had been Indian like the girls Aparna advertised to Pranab, perhaps Aparna could accept Pranab's relationship: their shared culture could have necessitated Aparna's presence in his life.

Deborah's entry into their lives upsets the balance of Bengali social life as she occupies the fifth chair at their four-chair table, embodying the presence of America within their Bengali home. This new presence of America dictates, to Aparna, what can be placed upon the surface of the table at mealtime, as "[her] mother complained about Deborah's visits, about having to make the food less spicy even though Deborah said she liked spicy food, and feeling embarrassed to put a fried fish head in the dal" (6). Deborah also complicates the expected social etiquette at the Bengali dinner table. Although she learns to eat with her hands instead of a fork and to pronounce Bengali words, she feeds Pranab with her fingers, touching and kissing him at gatherings, which causes Usha's mother and father to look down at their plates until the moment has passed (6). Deborah additionally brings Usha gifts, bits of American culture, and speaks to Usha in English, "a language in which, by that age, [she] expressed [her]self more easily than Bengali, which [she] was required to speak at home" (7). For both Usha and Pranab, Deborah represents the temptation of American life, an idea they

fall in love with, which Usha compares to "the way young girls often fall in love with women who are not their mother" (6), or implicitly, with the culture that is not their own.

America's reach into the lives of the Bengali characters reaches its zenith when it becomes the table's centrepiece during the Thanksgiving dinner hosted by Deborah. This dinner causes Aparna to realize it will not be possible to keep America out of her Bengali kitchen. Deborah's kitchen is chaotic, as food is still being prepared when the guests arrive. It is a place where alcohol is doled out to adults and teens alike, where guests arrive in casual dress, where the seating is arranged by alternating gender, where American food is served, and where guests move away from the table after dinner, allowing Usha space to smoke a joint and kiss Matty, an American boy. It stands in stark contrast to the formal etiquette of the Bengali table where no one touches, where formal dress is worn, where the kitchen is cleaned before guests arrive, and where polite conversation fills the prevailing silence. It is at this Thanksgiving dinner that Pranab reminisces upon the first time he ate dinner with Usha's family, calling it his first Thanksgiving in America, and framing Aparna's meal in relation to this American tradition. The parallel that Pranab draws between Thanksgiving and his first good meal in America causes Aparna to blush in embarrassment, not because he is attractive and she feels ugly, as Usha's narration suggests, but because, in his statement, Pranab reframes America as the table's centrepiece. Now the table itself and what lies upon its surface is tarnished by America's relentless reach. Pranab's reframing of Bengali food in relation to America proves to Aparna that, in marrying Deborah, Pranab had been "stripped [...] of his origins" (10), causing Aparna to feel uncomfortable and embarrassed. Later that night, locking eyes with Usha, who has since changed from her shalwar kameez into a pair of Deborah's jeans, Aparna realises that Usha, like Pranab, is "not only her daughter but a child of America as well" (14).

The anxiety of being both American and an 'Other' is most clearly metaphorized through the use of the kitchen table in the dinner-time discourse surrounding it. In "Hell-Heaven," silence emphasizes the loneliness of Aparna's life as a housewife. Usha's father's disposition is described as "monkish by nature, a lover of silence and solitude" and for whom "conversation was a chore" (4–5). He cherishes routine and ritual and "[does]

not eat with the reckless appetite of Pranab" (5). Usha's father's reservation contrasts Pranab's noisy disposition, emphasizing the root of Aparna's love for Pranab as developed partly from the disruption that his needs, noise, and "reckless appetite" (5) pose to her monotonous daily routine. Pranab's noise and appetite doubly function to excuse his diversion from Bengali culture by marrying an American woman as a result of his "reckless appetite" (5) or spontaneity. When Aparna sees that Usha has changed into jeans rather than her shalwar kameez at Thanksgiving—a direct rejection of Bengali culture—Aparna lifts her eyes from her teacup but remains silent, perhaps in acceptance, perhaps in sadness.

The silence that operates discursively within "Hell-Heaven" to emphasize the isolation deep ritual meets in America appears similarly in "What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank." Englander's story is centrally occupied with the question of how discourse must be read subtextually in order to understand how true debate appears in what is silent, and what is *not* being said. Most of the short story is written as dialogue. The parts that are narrated are written as the internal monologue of Deborah's husband, reflecting on the discourse around him and injecting his opinion through sarcastic humour:

> Lauren met Mark and they went off to the Holy Land and shifted from Orthodox to ultra-Orthodox, which to me sounds like a repackaged detergent—ORTHODOX ULTRA®, now with more deep-healing power. (Englander 3)

The narrator's internal sarcasm is often reactive against Mark's sweeping opinions and statements on what constitutes proper Judaism. In one such statement, Mark suggests that all people in Israel should be Jewish: "The Russian Immigrants [...] that's a whole separate matter. Most of them, you know, not even Jews" (4). Exasperated, the narrator asks Mark what he means—a question that is asked of Mark multiple times throughout the conversation. This question emphasizes how, through polarized, contrarian, and disjointed discourse, Mark positions himself as polar opposite to Deb, the narrator, America, and Jewish Americans. He goes against his previously expressed opinions to become the voice of authority on the Israeli occupation and American Judaism. In the beginning of the story, Mark says, "If we had what you have down here in South Florida [...] we'd have no troubles at

all," suggesting that America operates in excess, and Americans don't realize how easy they have it. When the narrator suggests that Israel *does* have what America has—"Sun and palm trees. Old Jews and oranges and the worst drivers around"—Mark changes the trajectory of the conversation to be once again critical of America, saying, "Yes, you've got everything now […] even terrorists" (2). If read without attention to the subtext, the silence, and what is not being explicitly said, Mark's statements would be contradictory. It is through the silence and what is not said that the reader can understand this conversation not to be a debate centred on the specifics of Jewish politics but the way America appropriates the assets of the 'Other' and how a foreign identity cannot remain autonomous inside America.

Mark's efforts to be post-America are further conflated with the style of discourse he participates in: a contrarian debate in which he plays the devil's advocate. This largely polarized style of discourse is reminiscent of contemporary American political discourse and, when read in conjunction with the setting of the American dinner table, suggests that, in America, one cannot be only Jewish or American but must be inseparably both. Just as Aparna feels her culture is threatened by the breach of America into her home through the presence of Deborah at the dinner table, Mark's relapse into an American style of discourse used to discuss the politics of Judaism in Englander's story demonstrates the reach of American politics into the Jewish home and reflexively illustrates why Mark and Lauren feel as though their lifestyle and culture is incompatible with that of America. Not only does Mark's sojourn in America immediately force his engagement with American-Judaism, both on the level of discursive form and content, but it becomes clear through this forced engagement that any imagined transcension from Americanism that his life in Israel grants him is illusionary: he is an American-Jew within and outside America.

Both stories use the dinner table to emphasize the binary between Western culture and the 'Other' through the touch of the table to the 'foreign' objects placed upon the table, specifically food and conversation, in order to stage discourse that mediates how foreignness functions within America. "Hell-Heaven" contrasts the silence and emptiness surrounding Usha's kitchen table with the lively family dynamic created by dining with Pranab, creating a space to be invaded by Deborah, who represents the infiltration

of America into the home of the 'Other.' "What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank" maintains a similar thesis, demonstrating how subjects with foreign identities who wish to maintain their cultural origins are incompatible with the ethos of the American melting-pot through the subtextual framing of the discourse that occurs at the kitchen table. Through staging the kitchen table as the convergence of American and foreign spheres in both stories, the surrounding discourse appears to suggest how America appropriates the assets of the 'Other.' It serves as a shadow under which anything that can be boasted as unique to elsewhere is diminished in comparison to America's fierce incorporation of everything—even foreignness. It is within America's appropriation of the 'Other' that the 'otherized' characters within each story find it difficult, and perhaps impossible, to live with their culture in America without being simply a 'foreign American.'

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BACK TO NATURE: GENDER-CODED PROPERTIES AND THE GENDERLESS PASTORAL IN AUSTEN'S *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE* AND *NORTHANGER ABBEY*

Katie Kinross

While it is widely known that many of Jane Austen's novels pushed the gender expectations of her time, one aspect of her work that is largely overlooked is her use of property and estates in conveying these gender relations. Katie compares two such works, *Northanger Abbey* and *Pride and Prejudice*, to assert that properties either subvert or bring to light the true nature of characters. Where *Northanger Abbey* uses Gothic architecture to speak to Catherine's naivety about the world and challenge her ideas that the men around her are subsequently ill-intentioned, *Pride and Prejudice* uses the picturesque to confirm to Elizabeth that Mr. Darcy is in fact a kind hearted man. Seduction is a very important theme here, as often the property reflects aspects about the love interest that may be confused or hidden beneath the surface. As such, both novels have notable gender-coded spaces, such as parsonages that reflect traits of toxic, or gentle, masculinity and pump-rooms and sitting rooms where women can converse with each other outside of male-dominated patriarchal homes. Further, if these gendered properties and rooms serve as lessons for Austen's young heroines to uncover, explore, and overcome, the arguably gender*less* space of nature and the pastoral marks a sense of authenticity, wherein the now-knowledgeable women can successfully enter adulthood. It also confirms a sense of maturity and truth in their relationships that required development from exploring these gendered spaces.

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In the literary world of Jane Austen, property is figured as central to every aspect of life, from gender relations to courtship. As characters learn more about themselves and those around them, they often encounter different types of properties that mirror the social dynamics at play. Specifically, the seduction between characters often coincides with their attraction to a property, whether because of its ability to reveal subliminal truths about a character or to challenge a character to search beneath the surface. Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* assumes the former, using property to reflect the state of various relationships, whereas her later novel *Northanger Abbey* seeks to usher its protagonist, Catherine, into adulthood through lessons learned from her misreading of properties. Estates further highlight the intense gender binary encountered in these heroines' adolescence, with houses reflecting masculine qualities, and rooms within or around them providing female-only spaces. Austen takes her heroines through these gender-coded estates to teach them important lessons about their own identities and the rules of courtship, before ultimately bringing both women to a state of maturity and authenticity in a genderless, pastoral setting. Thus, I will show that Jane Austen uses property, specifically as encountered by female coming-of-age heroines, as a tool to understand the gender politics of courtship. However, where estates bring to light these dynamics in *Pride and Prejudice*, they serve as subversive, yet educational challenges to naivety in *Northanger Abbey*.

Seduction is a key theme surrounding property and courtship in both novels, as often heroines are mystified by a character's estate before they are attracted to the character themselves. In *Northanger Abbey*, there is a false sense of romance as the idea of Northanger Abbey's Gothic castle seduces seventeen-year-old Catherine Morland, away from home for the first time, before she actually gets to know the property and its rulers. Obsessed with the Gothic novel *Mysteries of Udolpho*, Catherine derives her understanding of courtship and men entirely from fantasy literature. One of the inhabitants of the abbey, a man named Henry Tilney, feeds this seduction, joking that there are dimly lit halls, rooms without windows or doors, gloomy passages, and haunted rooms (Austen, *Northanger* 161). Because of this, "[Catherine's] passion for ancient edifices was next in degree to her passion for Henry Tilney—and castles and abbeys made usually the charm of those reveries which his image did not fill" (147). Here, Henry is intertwined with his property, as Catherine is charmed by both her literary interpretation of the abbey and Henry's engagement with her outlandish imagination.

However, as with the Gothic facade, the stories are not real, and Catherine must learn to differentiate between genuine and fiction-induced feelings. Upon arriving at the abbey, she finds it to be updated and modern, mirroring how the men there are not fantastical villains, but rather flawed, ordinary people. Despite this, she continues to find herself under the abbey's spell. Due to the "high arched passage, paved with stone" and "doors of which the General had given no account," Catherine allows herself to buy into her outlandish suspicions that Henry's father General Tilney has perhaps killed his own wife (188). Through conversations with Henry, in which he explains his father is a dominant presence but not a killer, she eventually becomes disillusioned, and "the visions of romance were over, Catherine was completely awakened" (196). Thus, her seduction has to be broken for her to enter both adulthood and a mature relationship with Henry.

Conversely, in *Pride and Prejudice*, seduction by property is not a lesson to grow from, but rather reflects the budding romances between characters. For it is Mr. Darcy's Pemberley estate which seduces protagonist Elizabeth Bennet, foreshadowing the development of their relationship. This is intentional, as Robert Irvine notes in the introduction to the Broadview edition of the novel: "[Pemberley's] aesthetic effects are also political ones, designed to have the effect they do on locals" and that "*Pride and Prejudice*, like Pemberley, […] aim[s] to seduce us into accepting its version of England (hierarchical, traditional, and picturesque) just as Darcy's estate seduces Elizabeth" (21). Furthermore, upon her first viewing of it, Pemberley is described as a "large, handsome, stone building, standing well on rising ground" (Austen, *Pride* 227), evoking Darcy's physical attributes and stoic character, but also his rising class and moral status in Elizabeth's mind. It further speaks to the future stability and trust she will have in her relationship with Darcy, as it is literally and metaphorically starting on solid ground.

Additionally, Elizabeth's cousin Mr. Collins becomes seduced by her home, Longbourn, as he is entitled to the estate after her father's passing. Mr. Collins often intertwines the Bennet girls with the Longbourn property, commodifying them, as he is to one day own the house and, by extension, potentially one of them. It is stated that "[the girls] were not the only objects of Mr. Collins's admiration. The hall, the dining-room and all its furniture were examined and praised […] [he] view[ed] it all as his own future property" (90).

He therefore uses the girls as tools to ease tensions around him being an outside inheritor for the Longbourn estate, with little regard for their own romantic interests. This seduction speaks to the future self-centeredness, bitterness, and weak masculinity of Mr. Collins, particularly in his interactions with Elizabeth, as from the beginning it is clear his future marriage will center around property, money, and status rather than love.

Another important use of property in the novels is to establish the gender politics at play, specifically the types of masculinities the protagonists encounter. Even the title of *Northanger Abbey* shows its centering around male spaces, despite the story's focus on the adolescence of a young girl. In the introduction to the Broadview edition of the novel, Claire Grogan writes that "the [title] of the earlier manuscript versions, […] 'Catherine' […] stress[es] the importance of the young heroine and her entrance into society. However, the eventual title of Northanger Abbey […] shifts the focus from the female protagonist to a symbol of patriarchal power—the abbey, a brick and mortar edifice" (16–17). This title revision underscores both the fear and intimidation felt by a small girl in a sublime castle, as well as the impact of Catherine's experience in the abbey on her development. Furthermore, the abbey is attached to "patriarchal concerns of birth, inheritance, and social standing—motivating forces for General Tinley and the Thorpes and yet very secondary for Catherine herself" (17). The hypermasculine attributes of the Tilneys are reflected back in their grand castle and prove to be a challenge to Catherine's gentle and socially-focused femininity. As such, the dominance of the male-ruled abbey disorients both the reader and Catherine, but ultimately serves as a learning opportunity for her to gain a sense of independence and maturity before entering womanhood.

Where properties in *Northanger Abbey* serve as challenging lessons on the dangers of patriarchal power, the properties of *Pride and Prejudice* directly illuminate the contrasting masculinities of various characters. For example, Mr. Darcy's Pemberley estate reveals the true beauty, honesty and kindness in his character, as well as his position as a member of the upper class. In the introduction to the Broadview edition, Irvine writes that "Elizabeth's independent mind is what allows her to laugh at Darcy as an individual […] yet that laughter is hushed when the splendour of Pemberley impresses on her senses Darcy's identity as a member of a national ruling class" (20). Put another way, "Pemberly is England rendered lovely" (21). Here, Austen uses this masculine-coded

estate to associate upper-class masculinity with traditional English values. She characterizes both Mr. Darcy and Pemberley as outwardly elegant, yet harboring a gentle interior, subtly asserting that the quiet kindness associated with England's landowning elite is the ideal form of masculinity.

The various rooms of the estate also speak to other important aspects of Darcy's admirable and sentimental masculinity. The dining parlour, for example, is described as being "large," "well-proportioned," and "handsomely fitted up" (Austen, *Pride* 227). These adjectives signify the allure of Mr. Darcy for Elizabeth. Additionally, she observes that "the rooms were lofty and handsome, and their furniture suitable to the fortune of their proprietor; but Elizabeth saw, with admiration of his taste, that it was neither gaudy nor uselessly fine; with less of splendor and more real elegance" (228). It is thus through Mr. Darcy's Pemberley estate that Elizabeth comes to recognize and appreciate his understated yet beautiful character. She further notices that Mr. Darcy decorates his sister's favorite sitting room "with greater elegance and lightness" (230), showing Elizabeth the way he cares for those around him.

Conversely, Elizabeth's cousin Mr. Collins and his parsonage represent a more boastful and thus less respectable masculinity. He is never able to remove his self-centeredness and male ego from his relationships, and thus his living arrangement is metaphorically and literally "small" and "convenient" (162). Further, Mr. Collins uses his property as a weapon to spite Elizabeth for refusing his proposal. It is stated that "in displaying the good proportion of the [parlour] room, its aspect and its furniture, [Mr. Collins] addressed himself particularly to her, as if wishing to make her feel what she had lost in refusing him" (161). Thus, his weak ego causes him to rely on his property to assert his dominance and sense of self. Dependence on material possessions to prove oneself is not the English way, and as such he is someone who is desired by very few.

While most of the features of the novel's properties are devoted to encoding masculinity, there are also spaces within and without these structures that reflect the limited, yet active, expression of femininity. One example of this in *Northanger Abbey* is the use of the pump-rooms, where the women in Bath gather for gossip and conversation. Catherine notes,

> She had already found [them] so favorable for the discovery of female excellence, and the completion of female intimacy, so admirably adapted for secret discourses and unlimited confidence, that she was most reasonably encouraged to expect another friend from within its walls. (Austen, *Northanger* 81)

Here, there is a space for only women to gather and establish their agency outside the confines of patriarchal male properties. Moreover, it is significant that *young* women are the predominant demographic using these spaces, because once they marry they become essentially equivalent to and subjects of the property that their husbands own. At this coming-of-age stage in their lives, they are able to explore various topics of conversation, such as the novels Catherine and Isabella Tilney discuss, and the rules of courtship. In her book, *The Courtship Novel*, Katherine Sobba Green talks about the importance of these "feminized space[s] [...] [in their] centering [of] stor[ies] in the brief period of autonomy between a young woman's coming out and her marriage" (102). Part of the reason Catherine is able to grow and better read the world around her is because of the conversations she has with Isabella—who serves as a mentor figure to her—in the pump-room.

Similarly, Charlotte Lucas in *Pride and Prejudice* creatively sets up a sitting room facing away from her husband, Mr. Collins. Charlotte is a friend of Elizabeth's who finds herself still single well into adulthood, and thus decides to marry for financial stability. She feels no connection to Mr. Collins and if anything seeks time away from him. Elizabeth notes that "when Mr. Collins could be forgotten, there was really a great air of comfort throughout, and by Charlotte's evident enjoyment of it, Elizabeth supposed he must be often forgotten" (Austen, *Pride* 162). Where *Northanger* centers around a woman's coming out period, *Pride* focuses sympathetically on the restrictions of married life. Catherine's pump-rooms offer a temporary escape outside the male dominance of the castle, but Charlotte is forever entrapped in Mr. Collins's house. To accommodate this, she carves out her own feminized space in a sitting room opposite her husband's study. Austen writes that "[Elizabeth] soon saw that [Charlotte] had an excellent reason for [setting up the room backwards], for Mr. Collins would undoubtedly have been much less in his own apartment, had they sat in [a room] equally lively; and she gave Charlotte credit for the arrangement" (170). By arranging a room facing away from Mr. Collins's study,

for both her own solitude and conversations with other women, she can secure a sense of autonomy even while in and as her husband's property.

If these masculine and feminine properties serve as lessons for Austen's young heroines to learn from, the natural, pastoral setting of her resolutions mark a transition to authenticity and adulthood in a gender-neutral space. In *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine's ultimate appreciation of the natural parsonage she visits shows her growth throughout the novel, as she leans away from romanticizing the ornate, perfectly crafted Gothic elements and towards a love of understated natural beauty and simplicity. In contrast to what Austen's near-contemporary William Gilpin called the antiquated "pointed arches" and "Saxon heaviness" style of Gothic castles (247), this estate is a "new-built substantial stone house with its semi-circular sweep and green gates" (Austen, *Northanger* 208). It is also stated that she "expresse[d] her affirmation at the moment with all the honest simplicity with which she felt […] 'it is the prettiest room I ever saw'" (209). Here, upon learning to appreciate the natural beauties—of both the property and her everyday life—rather than seeking fantastical childlike Gothic adventures, Catherine can begin to enter into adult life and mature relationships.

Additionally, masculinity and femininity can merge and co-exist in this pastoral setting, as when she and suitor Henry Tilney are at Beechen Cliff, "[Henry's] instructions [of the picturesque] were so clear that she soon began to see beauty in everything admired by him […], he became perfectly satisfied of her having a great deal of natural taste" (125). Similarly to Mr. Darcy, Henry's appreciation of aesthetics hints to him being a member of the gentry and represents a masculinity that embodies the natural beauty of England. The Tilneys "were viewing the country with the eyes of persons accustomed to drawing," and since Catherine can eventually access this viewpoint too, the previous gap between their gender differences begins to close (124). This depolarization of the gender binary allows for Catherine and Henry to enter into an equal, healthy, and mature relationship.

Similarly, in *Pride and Prejudice*, the nature of the Pemberley estate coincides with Elizabeth's new romantic feelings towards Mr. Darcy, upon discovering that she had initially misread his character. In front of Pemberley, there is "a stream of some natural importance [that] swelled into greater,

but without any artificial appearance […] [and] its banks were neither formal, nor falsely adorned […]. [Elizabeth] had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste" (Austen, *Pride* 227). Just like Mr. Darcy, the property is grand yet authentic. She now knows his kind-hearted character, and he now sees her as understanding, meaning they can finally work together as a couple. In a discussion of the pastoral, William Bray, one of Austen's contemporaries, argues that "those who have contemplated the waterfalls which nature exhibits […] will receive little pleasure from seeing a temporary stream falling down a flight of steps, spouted out of the mouth of dolphins or dragons or squirted from the leaves of a copper tree" (386). Just as in *Northanger*, a newly realized appreciation for the scaled-back picturesque in nature signals not only a sign of maturity but the ability for an equal and honest true love, as in this case, Elizabeth can move forward with Darcy, knowing who he truly is.

Ultimately, Austen's use of property as a literary device in both *Northanger Abbey* and *Pride and Prejudice* reveals to her heroines and audience the challenges that the gender binary presents to courtship. Just as gender is a performance through clothing, makeup and stylistic choices, so too are estates through high arches, ornate decorations, and manicured lawns. Often these properties signal a patriarchal dominance that prevents women from being able to express their own autonomy, and thus engage in successful, equal relationships. Austen therefore idealizes higher class masculinities, both in the socio-economic and moral sense, as gentle, sentimental Englishmen are preferable to boastful suitors. She also presents nature as a gender neutral space in which an appreciation of authenticity and natural aesthetics allows young people to transition into adulthood. Centuries after the publication of her novels, Austen's work reminds us that the invention, presentation, and enforcement of gender through man-made structures only leaves us more divided, and perhaps the healthiest thing we can do is embrace a more natural gender fluidity.

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MULTIFACETED MEMORIALIZATION: HOW DIASPORIC IDENTITY IN KIM THÚY'S *RU* REJECTS LITERARY CONVENTION

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This essay, written for ENG484: Canadian Refugee Narratives, examines the multifaceted identity of Nguyễn An Tịnh in Kim Thúy's 2009 novel, *Ru*. It asserts that Thúy's characterization of An Tịnh challenges conventions of the Western humanitarian narrative. Hadji Bakara's "Introduction: Refugee Narratives" discusses the predominance of a linear progression from the refugee's state of origin towards conclusive settlement in the West in the genre. An Tịnh's perception of Canada as a new beginning and her eventual achievement of the American dream seemingly abides by this linear progress. However, her supposed dissociation from the past is refuted by her memorialization of collective histories in Vietnam. An Tịnh's refugee narrative is multifaceted and contradictory, providing a realistic portrayal of an identity formed in diaspora. This essay posits that the reduction of the refugee's complexities into a linear narrative only reinforces ideals of Western humanitarianism. It asserts the importance of unconventional narratives which accurately represent voices that have been marginalized and constricted in the Western literary canon.

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Hadji Bakara's "Introduction: Refugee Literatures" discusses the increasing prevalence of multifaceted representations of the refugee figure in modern diasporic narratives. The post-World War II refugee narrative, by Eleni Coundouriotis's definition, is a genre that predominantly features "unidirectional 'stories of flight' from a single catastrophic event in the past towards safety and security in [the] West" (Bakara 290). This unidirectional movement is reductive, positioning refugee narratives as existing solely in service of Western saviourism—yet according to Bakara, it defines the "humanitarian narrative" that dominated the genre until the last decade (290). The refugee's consistent movement away from their arduous past toward conclusive settlement and success in the West delineates the linear progression of the refugee narrative. The American dream, or monetary and personal prosperity perpetuated as attainable to all, is the epitome of success in the West and may serve as the ideal culmination of the refugee's progression. By refusing to abide by this genre construct, modern refugee narratives assert the complexity of diasporic experiences and the autonomy of the individual refugee.[1]

Kim Thúy's 2009 novel, *Ru*, is one such narrative which resists the convention of linear progress and features a multifaceted representation of the refugee. *Ru* takes the form of a first-person memoir detailing the life of its narrator, Nguyễn An Tịnh, as she recalls how she and her family fled the violence of the Tet Offensive in Saigon, eventually settling in Canada, where she achieved social and economic success. In the prologue to *Ru*, Thúy includes a translation of the book's title in both French and Vietnamese. The title's Vietnamese meaning is "to lull"; contrastingly, its French definition is "figuratively, a flow, a discharge—of tears, of blood, of money." Thúy's title thus foreshadows the narrative's subversion of Western notions of refugee national belonging and identification: it is an indication that, despite genre convention, the nation of refuge cannot be reduced to a utopian place of "safety and security" (Bakara 290). This essay argues that An Tịnh's memorialization of her past in Vietnam alongside her linear pursuit to disidentify from it portrays a multifaceted identity that rejects Western genre conventions.

[1] See Bakara, especially p. 291, for a description of the inconclusiveness and aimlessness of Bertolt Brecht's "Refugee Conversations" as an example of a narrative that resists the convention of linearity. Bakara refers to Jana Schmidt's reading of Brecht's narrative as a "potent alternative to the linear, testimonial mode of the humanitarian narrative" (291).

Kim Thúy's *Ru* recounts An Tịnh's story through a first-person narration of her memories. The short, fragmented vignettes of the novel do not progress linearly; instead, the narrative jumps from different periods and places of An Tịnh's life. Marco Gemignani's "The Past if Past" argues that "[i]ndividually and collectively, constructions of memory and identity are mutual and recursive. Memory has a constitutive effect on identity and, in turn, one's identities encourage and shape the recalling of specific memories" (140). Memory itself, therefore, cannot be separated from one's identity, for they mutually alter and construct the other. Their interconnection is exemplified in An Tịnh's recollection of her son, Henri, running into Québec traffic and being saved by her other child, Pascal. While An Tịnh holds her children in relief, she recalls:

> I cried with joy as I took my two sons by the hand, but I cried as well because of the pain of that other Vietnamese mother who witnessed her son's execution. An hour before his death, that boy was running across the rice paddy with the wind in his hair, to deliver messages from one man to another [...] to prepare for the revolution, to do his part for the resistance. (129)

In this moment, An Tịnh's identification with her fellow Vietnamese mother and their shared national belonging alters her reaction to an event in Québec. The loss that this mother has experienced dictates An Tịnh's emotional response despite her son's safety, exemplifying Gemignani's assertion that memory cannot be isolated from identity.

Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith provide a framework for understanding the fragmented recollection of *Ru*, writing that, simultaneously, "personal and collective storytelling can become one way in which people claim new identities and assert their participation in the public sphere" as well as "a way of maintaining communal identification in the face of loss and cultural degradation" (6). Accordingly, An Tịnh's narration defines or "claims" her new life in Canada whilst maintaining or memorializing her Vietnamese background (6). Jenny James characterizes the fragmentation of experiences and events within the novel as "bricolage," Claude Lévi-Strauss' term for a form of expression which "makes unexpected recombinations from what remains, collecting and repurposing 'odds and ends' and 'fossilized evidence [...] of an individual or a society'" (James 43). *Ru*'s inclusion of An Tịnh's memories

in Vietnam in the mode of "bricolage" documents her shared history and solidifies her "communal identification" (Schaffer 6).

Ru's "bricolage" resists a representation of An Tịnh's identity as self-contained, instead integrating her story with a communal Vietnamese history. In one fragment, An Tịnh describes how people in her Québecois high school complained about learning their history while, "[e]lsewhere, people are too preoccupied with their day to day survival to take the time to write their collective history" (39). This is followed by her recollection of an old woman she had seen near Mekong Delta in Vietnam bent over, unable to stand straight. An Tịnh reflects:

> We often forget about the existence of all those women who carried Vietnam on their back while their husbands and sons carried weapons on theirs [...]. They were so weighed down by all their grief that they couldn't pull themselves up, couldn't straighten their backs, bowed under the weight of their sorrow [...]. [T]he women continued to bear the weight of Vietnam's inaudible history on their backs. (39)

An Tịnh's memory of her teenage years in Québec push her to document the "collective history" that those in Vietnam do not have the ability to share, exhibiting the "bricolage" posited by James (39). She connects the bent-over stature of the woman in Mekong Delta to the "bowed" experiences of Vietnamese women as a whole (39). Connecting to her memory of her high school history class in Québec, An Tịnh notes that the history of Vietnamese women is largely "inaudible," in contrast to the privilege of the widespread memorialization of national history in Canada (39). The "bricolage" evident in this moment depicts An Tịnh's inability to separate her shared Vietnamese history from her identity in Canada. She cannot forget what she once witnessed in Vietnam despite her spatial and temporal separation from these events; her memories mutually inform and shape her identity as a whole. By recounting the stories of these women, she sustains their collective memory. The memorialization of women in Vietnam continues when she recalls witnessing a group of girls line up in a Hanoi club as men aimed hundred-dollar bills at them—girls who also "carried all the invisible weight of Vietnam's history, like the women with hunched backs" (125). That the men shot money at them like "projectiles" alludes to the violence of the Vietnam war and the experiences these women must bear (125). The fragmented inclusion

of a collective history highlights the forgotten voices of Vietnam and their connection to An Tịnh's identity as a whole.

An Tịnh's perception of Canada as a new beginning, offering hope to herself and her family, initially reinforces the Western notion of the refugee narrative as one of linearity and Western saviourism. Upon arriving in Canada, An Tịnh remembers that she "felt naked, if not stripped bare [...]. I now had no points of reference, no tools to allow me to dream, to project myself into the future, to be able to experience the present, in the present" (8). The description of being "stripped bare" depicts her arrival as a fresh start or "blank slate." However, her nakedness also denotes her exposure to the uncertainty of her new environment and the vulnerability of her refugee status. Thúy's subsequent temporal description of the experience, in which An Tịnh cannot exist in the present or future, indicates that she feels bound to the past. It further represents the vulnerability that comes from one's need to seek refuge and the struggle to situate oneself in surroundings that are largely unknown. This blank slate is further exhibited by her family's former wealth in Saigon compared to their economic and social position in Canada. Upon applying for a language course in Québec, An Tịnh's parents find themselves "overqualified for the course but underqualified for everything else. Unable to look ahead for themselves, they looked ahead [...] for [their children]" (10). Her parents' overqualification for the French course—which allotted 40 dollars a week to its participants—and their inability to find financial aid elsewhere depicts the conditional nature of Western humanitarianism. Unable to achieve professional success for themselves, her parents are driven by the hope for their children's future: "They saw only what lay ahead. And so to make progress my brothers and I followed where their eyes led us" (11). Similar to An Tịnh's experience of arrival, her parents cannot "see" their present circumstance; instead, they must push it aside and only look toward "what lay ahead" (11). Their ties to Vietnam and statuses as refugees dictates their present, allowing them to only think of the future. Thúy's invocation of "progress" directly reinforces the idealization of a linear trajectory toward conclusive, Western success. This facet of linear progress is described by Yogita Goyal as the "difficult but ultimately rewarding struggle to become American, a transformation from wretchedness to righteousness, from victimization to voice" (380). This desire to "transform" mirrors An Tịnh and her family's dream, "the American dream" (Thúy 75). Thúy's allusion to the

American dream in *Ru* depicts the family's pursuit of a Westernized construct of success (75). The American dream that An Tịnh's family progresses toward, which is an attempt to disidentify from their past and achieve prosperity in the new nation state, depicts the linear success-story predominant in Westernized refugee narratives, further complicating Thúy's representation of the refugee figure in *Ru*.

An Tịnh eventually achieves the American dream and is seemingly able to disidentify from her past in Vietnam. As an adult, An Tịnh attends a restaurant school in Hanoi, where a waiter does not understand why she is speaking Vietnamese: "I was too fat to be Vietnamese [...]. I understood later that he was talking not about my forty-five kilos but about the American dream that had made me more substantial, heavier, weightier" (77). The heaviness that comes with the American dream parallels the earlier weight said to be carried upon the backs of the women in Vietnam. An Tịnh's embodiment of the American dream thus allows her to impose her weight on the world around her, instead of the alternative—the history of Vietnam controlling her life as it did with the lives of many women before her. The American dream makes her believe that she can "dance to the same rhythm as the girls who swayed their hips at the bar to dazzle men whose thick billfolds were swollen with American dollars" (77). An Tịnh believes that she can maintain her understanding of less fortunate individuals in Vietnam from a distance through the lens of her privileged American dream. However, because of her supposed disidentification from her Vietnamese past, the waiter states that she "no longer had the right to declare [she] was Vietnamese because [she] no longer had their fragility, their uncertainty, their fears" (77). Due to An Tịnh's achievement of Western success, she can no longer experience the hardships of life in Vietnam, and, therefore, must relinquish her Vietnamese identity. She has completely disidentified from her national belonging, suggesting that one cannot be Vietnamese without presently sharing Vietnamese experiences and trauma. The progression toward the American dream therefore presents an avenue by which connection to the past and all its effects upon identity can be completely severed.

An Tịnh's dissociation from her history in Vietnam is further depicted in her tendency "to strip naked in front of friends and sometimes strangers," as she "recount[s] bits of [her] past as if they were anecdotes or comedy

routines or amusing tales from far-off lands featuring exotic landscapes, odd sound effects and exaggerated characterizations" (136). Her characterization of herself as "naked" simultaneously refers to the memory of the women in the club and commodification of female sexuality in Vietnam, as well as the nakedness she feels when she first arrives in Canada. Therefore, her nakedness references both the history and trauma that she left behind in Vietnam as well as her attempt to reconfigure herself into a blank slate. The diminishment of the effects of such stories and traumas effectively strips her of her past and commodifies her to appeal to those around her. She further claims: "[t]hat estrangement, that detachment, that distance allows me to buy, without any qualms and with full awareness of what I'm doing, a pair of shoes whose price in my native land would be enough to feed a family of five for one whole year" (137). Her "detachment" from the responsibility and solidarity she may have had toward people in Vietnam represents a disidentification from that aspect of her identity. This lack of national belonging allows her to engage in consumerism, a facet of the American dream. An Tịnh is persuaded to purchase the shoes by the salesperson, who promises that with them she will be able to "walk on air" (137). By attributing weightlessness to consumerism and, consequently the American dream, Thúy further alludes to the weight of An Tịnh's historical identity. An Tịnh later states that "when we're able to float in the air, […] [we] separate ourselves from our roots—not only by crossing an ocean and two continents but by distancing ourselves from our condition as stateless refugees, from the empty space of an identity crisis" (137). Thus, in *Ru*, shared histories of Vietnam are framed as a weight that suppresses, while detachment is a freedom which allows one to "float." The emptiness is An Tịnh's perceived lack of national belonging in the refugee condition, a "stateless" existence. Her success and achievement of the American dream exhibits a disidentification from Vietnam and a detachment from the effects of her past upon her identity.

Kim Thúy's *Ru* presents An Tịnh's identity as a one of complexity and seeming contradiction, in which she remembers her historical identity while at the same time disidentifying from it. Nevertheless, the novel's conclusion reconciles the conflict between these states of diasporic identification. Vinh Nguyen asserts that An Tịnh's process of recollection is a method of expressing gratitude for the moments and people who shaped her identity. An Tịnh's fragments of memory "sketch and constellate a subject whose boundaries

are expansive, whose constitution is based on multiplicity, whose presence is built on the sediments of others" (Nguyen 46). Marco Germignani also contradicts the notion that the diasporic subjects' pasts cannot be both "ignored and embraced" (149) through his assertion that "the refugees' invitation to consider the traumatic past as past and, at the same time, to find strength and motivation in painful memories helps to create a dynamic of survivorship" (150). Thúy's novel culminates with An Tịnh's observation that, "[a]lone as much as together, all those individuals from my past have shaken the grime off their backs in order to spread their wings with the plumage of red and gold" (140). Thúy describes the individuals who are integral to this collective identity as both having freed themselves from the "grime" of their past and having maintained their Vietnamese history, as seen in their prideful and strong "plumage of red and gold" (140). An Tịnh, in this moment, reconciles both the desire to disidentify from histories of trauma and violence with gratitude for and memorialization of her national belonging.

Kim Thúy's *Ru* both accepts and refutes Western genre constructs of the refugee narrative. An Tịnh's fragmented, boundless recollection of the events, places, and people she has encountered throughout her life represents her identity, which is defined by a shared history, as shown by her memorialization of the women she lived alongside in Vietnam. An Tịnh's perception of Canada as a blank slate where the American dream can be achieved and the past left behind depicts her and her family's desire to disengage from their past for the sake of a successful future. Moreover, her achievement of this dream represents a supposed disidentification from her Vietnamese identity and the "weight," or trauma it denotes, conforming to the conventional linear progress of Western humanitarian narratives. *Ru* concludes with a message of hope for the mutual existence of two competing forces: a memorialization of shared histories and a desire to disengage from the past. Thúy's novel thus refutes the Westernized genre conventions of diasporic narratives discussed in Bakara's introduction to refugee narratives through a complex and non-conclusive representation of Nguyễn An Tịnh's refugee story. An Tịnh expresses gratitude and acceptance of the past as integral to who she is; she also acknowledges that her success is due to those who came before her without shying from her hope to realize a better future.

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MILTON'S FRAUDULENT PHOENIX: A QUESTION OF ANGELIC GRACE AND SATANIC IDEOLOGY IN *PARADISE LOST*

Celine Hajj Sleiman

From the muses Milton calls upon to the heroes he laments, the language of *Paradise Lost* is bursting with classical symbolism. It was not a reoccurring allusion, however, which sparked Celine's curiosity, but the singular invocation of the phoenix—the fiery bird with both classical and biblical histories—which intrigued her in its solitude. Tracing the heritage of the phoenix myth and its conception in the Miltonic imagination, what arose was a compelling parallel between the narrative of rebirth, and Satan's rhetoric of rebellion before his fall from Heaven.

Recalling the representations of the phoenix in Milton's early prose, Celine argues that this parallel characterizes the bird as a fraud: a show of angelic obedience that hides an ideological contradiction. Celine's interpretation of the phoenix simile considers the larger issues of authority, heroism and theological truth, while paying heed to Milton's detail-oriented style and his tendency towards ambivalence.

Written for ENG303: Milton, taught by Professor John Rogers, this paper emerged from Celine's fascination with the question of authorial intent, and the unresolved tension between the poem's official doctrine and the alternatives offered by its most alluring villain. Celine would like to thank *IDIOM* editors Sean Morgado, Julia Mihevc, and Tahsin Tabeya Amin Maansib for their thoughtful feedback and support throughout the editing process.

In a poem so rife with allegorical language as *Paradise Lost*, it is easy to overlook the significance of a single simile. Yet this reading would not be a just consideration of the layers of thought, and occasional quip, Milton dedicates to the crafting of each comparison. Given the intricacy of the Miltonic simile and its tendency to transcend temporal frameworks, I argue for a closer examination of Milton's phoenix simile in Book 5 of *Paradise Lost*. In this instance, the narrator likens the fiery bird to the archangel Raphael during his descent to earth, painting the angel's beauty as superior to the rest of God's creations. Upon first impression, the phoenix is a solitary figure, disconnected from the thematic tensions that ripple beneath the poem's eloquent surface; but a closer investigation of the myth's muddled history and Milton's previous allusions to it in his prose writings may suggest an alternative meaning—one that characterizes the bird as a mask for rebellion. Considering the heritage of the phoenix in its classical and biblical forms, its unique conception in the Miltonic imagination, and the parallels between its mythology and Satan's rhetoric of self-creation, I argue that Milton's phoenix is a fraud, one seemingly in line with the official doctrine of angelic obedience, all the while empowering the ideologies of the Devil.

The phoenix belongs to that rare breed of story that has survived through cultural differences and religious reformation. To understand Milton's unique representation of the phoenix, it is necessary to identify which version of the story he accepted: the pagan or the biblical. In her study of Milton's bestial symbolisms, Karen Edwards highlights that the earliest literary representation of the phoenix appears in Herodotus's *Histories*, where the Greek historian warns the reader that it is a story he "can hardly credit" (qtd. in Edwards 263). He describes the "sacred bird [...] whose name is phoenix" which "comes into Egypt: once in five hundred years [...] when his father dies." The immortal bird is "most like an eagle in shape and size" with a "plumage partly golden and partly red" (Herodotus 2.73). The most notable aspect of Herodotus's account, however, is the process of its regeneration: when the phoenix's father dies, it encases him in an egg of myrrh and then flies from Arabia to the temple of the sun god Helios. There, it buries the egg containing its father so that he can be reborn as a young phoenix, who assumes the role of the son and allows the cycle to repeat itself (2.73). The Roman poet Ovid added to this narrative in his *Metamorphoses* by describing the bird's self-sufficiency: "It lives not on grasses and grains" (15.454) but

on the light of the sun. The pagan phoenix of classical literature is therefore the ultimate embodiment of a self-sustaining creature which has come from nothing, and yet has always existed.

Transcending the classical era that birthed it, the tale of the phoenix came to inspire the great theologians of the English Renaissance. Apart from one irregular and highly disputed translation of the Book of Job, the regenerative bird is never explicitly cited in the Bible, but was nevertheless appropriated as a symbol of Christ—the very heart of the Christian doctrine. This can be attributed to the cycle of rebirth in which both figures partake (Edwards 264). Despite the popularity of this association in Milton's time, there was never any connection between the phoenix and Christ, or the Son, in Milton's writings. However, there are two prose works which precede the composition of *Paradise Lost* and may clarify the role of the phoenix in the poem. In *The Reason of Church Government*—a religious pamphlet in which Milton argues that the church should be lead by elected preachers rather than bishops—Milton refers to the bird sarcastically; he writes about the rarity of a man who can separate "Prelaty or Prelateity in abstract notion" from prelacy "in his skin," that it is inseparable "or not oftener otherwise then a Phenix hath bin seen" (*Reason* 1.824–25). The last line assumes that the phoenix is a well-accepted fiction and that the reader must know this, hence the undertone of incredulity. Based on the satirical context in which the phoenix is summoned, it would appear that Milton uses it to symbolize misperception—a contrast to the content of *Paradise Lost*, which to him was historically true.

The association of the phoenix with the theme of falsehood is repeated in Milton's *Pro Se Defensio*, an argumentative defamation of his political opponent Alexander More. More was accused of falsifying testimonies against the parliamentarians with whom Milton was politically allied. Criticizing More, Milton wrote, "[y]ou who were till now a phoenix, will be left at least a foul hoopoe, not only deplumed but bare-buttocked" (*Pro* 4.784). The criticism targets More's alleged lies, while Milton's bestial metaphor paints a transformation of character: the phoenix, golden and glorious, is reduced to a "foul hoopoe," a species of bird known for consuming human excrement and lingering near tombs. Though the insult is communicated through the filthy hoopoe, it is the degradation of the phoe-

nix which is notable. Characterizing the bird as a fraud whose deception is ultimately exposed (Edwards 266), Milton transforms it from a symbol of virtue to a cheap facade. Thus, by conceiving the phoenix as More's mask of righteousness, Milton is attributing the creature to insincerity, and allowing it to fulfill an illusionary role in his imagination.

The derogatory undertones in Milton's early allusions to the myth suggest an implicit rejection of its theological appropriation and express a skepticism that is reminiscent of Herodotus's disbelief. It is not until *Paradise Lost*, however, that Milton leans more explicitly towards the phoenix of pagan tradition, alluding to the classical narratives over his contemporaries' theological appropriations of the creature. He does not compare the undying bird to Christ, but to the angel Raphael as he descends from Heaven to Eden at the Father's behest and warns Adam of Satan's plot to corrupt humanity. The narrator thus describes the angel's flight: "[o]f tow'ring eagles, to all the fowls he seems / A phoenix, gazed by all, as that sole bird / When to enshrine his relics in the sun's / Bright temple, to Egyptian Thebes he flies" (*Paradise* 5.272–74). In mentioning the temple, Egypt, and the burial of a relic—referring to the bird's egg—Milton has revisited the defining features of Herotodus and Ovid's phoenix, thereby claiming a continuity between its representation in the text and the details of its life as outlined by classical literature.

Having accepted the phoenix's classical heritage, there are two readings that may be derived from this context: the aesthetic and the ideological. The aesthetic interpretation of Milton's pagan phoenix places Raphael in a position of superiority over the rest of God's creatures, as he is the rare eagle to their common fowl—a vision of light and ether to man's flesh and blood. This supports the higher status of the angel in Milton's theological hierarchy; the nature of angelic grace surpasses any beauty that man or beast may possess. "That sole bird" (*Paradise* 5.273) is unique on earth, as Raphael is among God's terrestrial creations. The following details pertaining to the phoenix's journey emphasize the piety of Raphael's task, having been instructed by God to warn man against Satan's revenge plot, absolving Him of any blame for their eventual Fall: "nor can justly accuse / Their Maker, or their making, or their fate, / As if predestination overruled / Their will" (Milton, *Paradise* 3.112–15). The connection between Raphael's singular beauty and his faithful submission resembles Ovid's representation

of the bird, where the phoenix "bearing his cradle, along with the tomb of his father [...] piously places his burden at the sacred doors" (Ovid 15.466–69). From an aesthetic perspective, the actions of the angel and the phoenix are mirrored in one another's flights. By crafting a parallel between the pious bird who upholds tradition and the dutiful angel who upholds God's justice, Milton is characterizing the angel's obedience as a morally correct action. The phoenix "piously" obeys the rituals of his creator, as Raphael obeys the will of God. This foreshadows Raphael's explanation to Adam and Eve of their potential to evolve into ethereal spirit and rise to the status of angels if they "be found obedient" (*Paradise* 5.433). Thus, the aesthetic parallel Milton draws between Raphael's descent and the phoenix's journey reaffirms the poem's official representation of obedience as the highest virtue and disobedience as the worst transgression.

The romanticism of Raphael's obedience is undermined, however, by the ideological consequences of the phoenix's self-sufficiency. Satan's exposition of his theory of self-creation in his debate against the loyal angel Abdiel can help make sense of this contradiction. In one of the poem's most radical moments, Satan—who has not yet fallen and is enraged by God's exaltation of the Son—proposes that the angels have no allegiance to the Father, who he claims is not their true creator. With his usual combination of sarcasm and skepticism, Satan asks:

> who saw / When this creation was? Remember'st thou /
> Thy making, while the Maker gave thee being? / We know
> no time when we were not as now; / Know none before us,
> self-begot, self-raised. (Milton, *Paradise* 5.856–60)

Satan is offering an alternative to the doctrine of creation, a version of Genesis where the angels' "own quick'ning power" (*Paradise* 5.861) allowed for the birth of Heaven, their native land. Framing his argument as a question of faith ensures that there can be no convincing, rational response to contradict his theory; the idea that a group of angels existed at the beginning of all things seems just as likely as the idea of a nameless deity willing the world into existence. After all, God is the only being who can verify having created the angels and if his word is no longer trustworthy then there can be no authoritative truth on either side. By casting reasonable doubt, Satan's rhetoric unbinds the angels' genesis from the manacles of God's unimpeachable authority, and therefore lays claim to their free will.

Considering Satan's argument in the larger context of the narrative, a compelling parallel emerges between Heaven's silver-tongued adversary and Raphael's pagan phoenix. The idea of angelic self-sufficiency is undeniably similar to the process undergone by the phoenix "which can renew its own being" (Ovid 15.453) and does not sustain itself on earthly foods. Satan's "self-begot" angels who—according to Raphael's explanation of angelic nature to Adam in Book 5—do not need "corporal nutriments" (5.498) seem to adopt the features of the classical phoenix Milton has chosen to represent. Thus Raphael's aesthetic resemblance to the bird is contradicted by its theological alignment with Satan's idea of self-genesis. It is notable that Milton structures Satan's debate with Abdiel such that it has no resolution. This has the subtle effect of elevating the status of his argument from blasphemy to a valid theological alternative without affirming or denying its truth.

Given the lack of definitive authority on the subject, it is possible that Milton is using the phoenix simile to set the reader up with an answer. If the phoenix simile is foreshadowing Satan's ideology of self-creation, it may also be affirming its legitimacy as an argument. God does not seem to have a place in the mythology of the phoenix; he cannot be the bird's father, because the bird's father is none other than his own self. He is all things at once: father, son and legacy—a creature that is truly self-begotten. Had the phoenix been compared to a non-angelic being, this connection would not be so monumental; but as it stands, Milton has chosen to compare one of the few self-sufficient creatures in classical literature with the only other kind of being that Satan suggests may also be self-sufficient. By placing the phoenix in the canon of his creationism, Milton has undermined God's necessity, and while he never explicitly rejects the 'official' doctrine of creation, he certainly questions it. If God "who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (*King James Version*, Ephesians 4:6) is not in the phoenix, then he is not above the phoenix; and if he is not above the phoenix then he is not above the angels who are likened to it.

On deciphering Milton's symbolism, scholar Anthony Low asks readers to assume a degree of continuity between his works: "Milton's poems often are more like symphonies, skillfully built up out of familiar and half-familiar themes to achieve new and harmonious wholes" (Low 219). While Low's observation targets Milton's poetry, I argue that it can extend to all his body of work; with that in mind, it may be useful to recall the representations of the

phoenix in Milton's prose and to consider whether they too support its fraudulence in *Paradise Lost*. In the prose works, Milton's phoenix is at its best a fable and at its worst an imposter. In other words, a fraud. Given that it is compared to Raphael—the manifestation of obedience to the Father—the angel's aesthetic similarities to the phoenix can be read as a disguise for ideological rebellion. The phoenix poses as an example of angelic duty, while its very invocation empowers Satan's theological counterargument. The mythos of the phoenix functions as proof for the existence of self-sufficiency, challenging the role of the Father as the "one first matter all" (*Paradise* 5.472). Heeding Low's advice, there appears to be a point of similarity between More's phoenix and Raphael's: the fraudulent conception of the phoenix, as found in Milton's prose, and the self-begotten one, as found in *Paradise Lost*, both revel in disingenuity. This intertextual interpretation allows the reader to reconsider the truthfulness of Raphael's words throughout *Paradise Lost*. It is Raphael who later narrates the events of the Fall to Adam and Eve, and who guides the reader through the poem's official doctrine of obedience. But if Raphael's phoenix is an imposter, then what of the theological truths the angel offers? Are they just as fictitious as the fiery bird who is likened to their source?

The phoenix simile in *Paradise Lost* can therefore be considered a double-edged sword in Milton's literary arsenal. Upon first glance, it reads as an aesthetic description of Raphael's golden beauty, a compliment to his dutiful nature; but the image of Raphael's phoenix ripples with contradiction. In light of Milton's interpretation of the phoenix as a fraud—the half-familiar themes he introduced in his early prose—combined with Satan's new theory of self-sufficiency, a more radical reading of the simile emerges. The bird may not serve the poem's outward orthodoxy but its internal conflict, as it empowers the ideology of self-creation and expresses a skepticism towards the Father's role as Creator. In a narrative where the defiance of authority has been the defining feature of a fallen society, the question of demonic self-determination becomes a question for humanity. If Adam and Eve had that same power, then the Fall itself could be re-conceptualized; it may not be the end of virtue but the beginning of self-authorship, making Satan's temptation a favour rather than a revenge. The phoenix is a distracting image to invoke: a rare, fiery beauty that is on par with the ethereal messengers of Heaven—the perfect mask if Milton wished to hide a secret sympathy for the Devil he must officially condemn.

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"THE LANGUAGE OF THE RIOT": RACIAL LEGIBILITY IN NELLA LARSEN'S *QUICKSAND* AND ANN PETRY'S *THE STREET*

Natalie Hangqi Song

Originally written for ENG379 "Something Akin to Freedom": African American Women's Fiction, this paper examines what it means to become a racially legible subject, and how the Black female protagonists in Nella Larsen's *Quicksand* and Ann Petry's *The Street* navigate these requirements for legibility. Tracing the process by which Helga Crane in *Quicksand* and Lutie Johnson in *The Street* attempt to find belonging within Black and White societies, Natalie suggests that legibility and acceptance within cultural formations demand a negation of the self—an elimination of individual identity in order to adhere to set racial categories. While Larsen and Petry write seemingly tragic endings for their heroines, with both protagonists alienated from their communities, Natalie was inspired by Saidiya Hartman's treatment of illegibility as protest in her essay, "The Anarchy of Colored Girls" to consider whether Helga and Lutie also exhibit their own acts of insurgency. As both heroines gradually lose their grasp on language, failing to find words that adequately communicate their internal states, Natalie argues that these moments of unintelligible expression function as resistance against a notion of legibility which operates primarily for the comfort and benefit of White communities. Natalie would like to thank Professor Naomi Morgenstern and Marie Song for their valuable comments during the composition of this essay, and Jovana Pajovic, Alanna Carolan, and Kuda Simbi for their excellent suggestions during the editing process.

Nella Larsen's *Quicksand* and Ann Petry's *The Street* consider questions of legibility, examining how Black women become legible within various cultural formations. Both texts feature moments in which different racial communities read and misread their protagonists, revealing the reductive categories in which Black women are often placed. "The Anarchy of Colored Girls," Saidiya Hartman's non-fictional analysis of the incarceration and protest of Black women during the Harlem Renaissance, touches upon similar issues of legibility, drawing particular attention to how illegibility functions as a possible avenue for resistance against rigid racial categorization. Commenting on the same cultural moment in which *Quicksand* takes place, Hartman demonstrates the construction of racial legibility through a consideration of the contradictory readings of jazz music by different racial groups. While White critics labeled jazz an illegible and unpleasant form of expression, Hartman explains that jazz functioned for Black communities as an insurgent communicative framework. In her analysis of the uprising at Lowell Cottage, a prison that incarcerated a disproportionate number of Black women for displaying a supposed potential for future criminal behaviour, Hartman similarly contrasts the newspapers' characterization of the women's outraged cries as chaotic noise with her own description of their yells as a sonic protest. Hartman reveals that because White communities dictate the terms of racial and linguistic legibility, Black women make their voices heard through their own forms of art and language that resist easy readability for White spectators.

Quicksand follows Helga Crane's search for belonging and fulfillment as a biracial woman in 1920s America, and portrays discretely Black and White communities as rigid social groupings that seek to efface individual difference and intersectionality. *The Street* centres upon Lutie's attempts as a single Black mother living in Harlem to secure a future for her son Bub, revealing American notions of success and individuality to be fictions absent of Black women. Although Helga Crane and Lutie Johnson struggle to be readable and thus acceptable within their communities, Larsen and Petry also suggest the possibility of new forms of language and protest for their heroines. Both texts show their Black female protagonists undergoing a process of negation that allows them to be legible within their communities while alienating them from their individual experiences. Ultimately, this erasure necessitates both Helga Crane and Lutie Johnson to define their existences using alternative standards of legibility and new modes of language.

Beginning in Naxos, an all-Black girls college where Helga teaches, *Quicksand* shows that Helga fails to find belonging within a Black community because her acceptance within this group requires a negation of her selfhood as a biracial woman. Helga describes Naxos as "a big knife with cruelly sharp edges ruthlessly cutting all to a pattern, the white man's pattern. Teachers as well as students were subjected to the paring process, for it tolerated no innovations, no individualisms" (Larsen 39). This act of cutting and shaping reveals the process of violent reduction and recreation that each Naxos community member undergoes. Larsen moreover shows that in spite of its status as an all-Black institution, Naxos still operates with "the white man's pattern." Helga's individual identity as a biracial woman is thus unacceptable because Naxos defines Blackness against inflexible White formulations of race. Furthermore, as Helga contemplates her discontentment within the Naxos community, she determines that the reason is "[a] lack of acquiescence. She hadn't really wanted to be made over" (42). This refusal to enact the passivity of "acquiescence" as well as her unwillingness "to be made over" suggest that what Helga "lacks" is consent to quiet self-erasure. Larsen therefore demonstrates that acceptance within Naxos requires negation and recreation, and the refusal to do so labels Helga "in a queer indefinite way" (42). Although the members of Naxos clearly associate Helga with strangeness and disruption, Larsen's use of the word "indefinite" also highlights an ambiguous, undefined quality to Helga's status in the community. Helga refuses negation, and she therefore remains outside the lines of legibility.

In addition to her alienation from Naxos, Helga's experiences in Denmark with Axel, a Danish painter who becomes enamoured with her, illustrate her lack of belonging within White communities and the construction of a new identity that is legible to White spectators, but not to Helga herself. When Helga sees Axel's painting of her, his depiction of a "disgusting sensual creature with her features" (119) horrifies her. Larsen highlights the sexualization and dehumanization that Axel employs to paint this portrait, revealing Helga's relegation to a sub-human sexual muse in a White artist's representation of a Black woman. In contrast to Helga's repulsion, the Danish "collectors, artists, and critics had been unanimous in their praise and it had been hung on the line at an annual exhibition, where it had attracted much flattering attention and

many tempting offers" (119). This White artistic community receives the portrait favourably because Helga, like the painting, is legible to them as a beautiful object to be admired, fetishized, and owned. Helga, however, fails to identify any aspect of herself within the painting, claiming that "anyone with half an eye could see that it wasn't she" (119). That Helga is unable to perceive the portrait as human, describing the painting as a "creature," suggests that Axel's artistic rendering is almost wholly illegible to her. Through Helga's description of Axel's painting, Larsen demonstrates that the Danes formulate Helga's identity in terms that are legible to themselves; however, in doing so, they produce a portrait that is incomprehensible to Helga and divorced from her own understanding of self. Therefore, in highlighting the relationship between legibility and community acceptance, Larsen reveals that the process of negation and recreation that allows for legibility alienates Helga from her selfhood.

Petry similarly shows that to be legible as a Black person within White society involves an erasure of the individual in favour of White narratives about race. After Lutie sees the dead body of a young Black boy murdered by a White shopkeeper, she comes upon the story in the newspapers the next day. Petry writes that Lutie "held the paper in her hand for a long time, trying to follow the reasoning by which that thin ragged boy had become in the eyes of a reporter a 'burly Negro'" (170). Lutie's personal encounter of the frail boy stands in stark contrast to the newspaper's depiction of a powerful Black man. Petry demonstrates that in order for the young boy's murder to be readable as a news story, the reporter draws on harmful cultural narratives about Black criminality, erasing the "thin ragged boy" and inventing the "burly Negro." Lutie goes on to conclude that "if you looked at them from inside the framework of a fat weekly salary, and you thought of colored people as naturally criminal, then you didn't really see what any Negro looked like. You couldn't, because the Negro was never an individual" (170–1). This description of looking from inside a framework of a weekly salary draws attention to the social factors, specifically here economic status, that shape and obscure the way in which people consider the subjectivity of other individuals. Moreover, in asserting that "the Negro was never an individual," Lutie reveals that the reporter's story about a "burly Negro" is not so much a story about the individual murdered boy on the street as it is about a general cultural construction of Blackness and criminality.

Lutie herself experiences a similar process of erasure that allows for legibility within upper-class White circles. While describing her train rides with Mrs. Chandler, Lutie recalls amicable conversations between herself and her employer: "on the ride down they would talk—about some story being played up in the newspapers, about clothes or some moving picture" (43). This casual small talk disperses upon their arrival at Grand Central because, as Lutie recalls, Mrs. Chandler's tone shifts "so that the other passengers pouring off the train turned to watch the rich young woman and her colored maid [...] the voice unmistakably established the relation between the blond young woman and the brown young woman" (43). Petry draws attention to the other passengers watching the exchange between the two women, suggesting that Mrs. Chandler's voice changes because she is concerned with how an outside perspective reads her relationship to Lutie. Notably, Petry uses neither Mrs. Chandler's nor Lutie's name in this description, addressing them instead as "the rich young woman and her colored maid" and "the blond young woman and the brown young woman." The passage thus conveys Mrs. Chandler's desire to ensure that the other passengers, as readers of this scene, are able to categorize herself and Lutie into these racialized archetypes, consequently effacing the real individuals involved in the conversation. Similar to the negation of the "thin ragged boy" and the subsequent construction of the "burly Negro," singular identities are inconsequential to Mrs. Chandler; she is interested solely in the clearly legible tropes that she and Lutie embody and the acceptable configurations of said tropes. Petry therefore portrays the Black characters in *The Street* as under the perpetual scrutiny of White readers, revealing the role that legibility plays in the efforts of upper-class White people to enforce their superior social position in relation to Black people within American society.

In *Quicksand*, Helga also repeatedly finds herself under the observation of external readers who insist that she render herself a legible subject for them. Ultimately, however, Helga fails to satisfy their demands for readability because of the fundamental inadequacy of language to express her complex state of being. Throughout the text, Larsen draws attention to scrutinizing looks aimed at Helga. For example, when Helga tells Dr. Anderson, the principal of Naxos, about her unhappiness at the school, she notes that "[h]is gaze was on her now, searching" (53). Similarly, during Helga's encounter with James Vayle, her former fiancé, Larsen writes

that "he was grave, his earnest eyes searchingly upon her" (129). Larsen's description of the stares as "searching" depicts Dr. Anderson and James Vayles's gazing at Helga as purpose-driven. The men seek to discover a particular yet unnamed aspect of Helga, suggesting that these searching gazes are attempts to read her. Helga, in response to these attempts, struggles to make herself legible to outside perspectives. As she considers her dissatisfaction at Naxos, for example, "Helga Crane couldn't explain it, put a name to it" (57). After Axel questions why she denies his proposal, "Helga let that pass because she couldn't, she felt, explain [...]. She had no words which could adequately, and without laceration to her pride, convey to him the pitfalls" (118). Larsen therefore repeatedly shows that there is no language that Helga can use to explain herself sufficiently, and thus Helga remains illegible to the different communities in which she finds herself.

These repeated failed attempts by Helga to explain herself come to a head in the Deep South, in which Helga ultimately refuses to accommodate external standards of legibility. As Helga recovers from childbirth and grows increasingly discontent with her life in Alabama, Larsen includes a brief conversation between Helga and her nurse, Miss Hartley:

> "No! I should say you can't have pie. It's too indigestible. Maybe when you're better—"
>
> "That," assented Helga, "is what I said. Pie—by and by. That's the trouble."
>
> The nurse looked concerned. Was this an approaching relapse? Coming to the bedside, she felt at her patient's pulse while giving her a searching look. No. (160)

Miss Hartley's description of pie as "indigestible" demonstrates that she discusses pie in the literal sense as a food. Helga, however, refers to a figurative pie from a song called "Pie in the Sky," which criticizes preachers' emphasis on spiritual salvation for enslaved Black people while disregarding the real, earthly limitations that they face (Kemnitzer 328). A misunderstanding thus arises between the two women. However, rather than try to bring them both to the same understanding, Helga merely reaffirms her previous statement without explanation: "That [...] is what I said." In her increased confusion, the nurse aims a "searching look" at Helga in an

effort to read her like Mr. Anderson and James Vayle do in previous scenes. Immediately following this "searching look," however, is a short and decisive "[n]o." On one hand, Helga's "no" seems to answer Miss Hartley's question: "Was this an approaching relapse?" On the other hand, this "no" also functions as a response to Miss Hartley's searching gaze. Helga rejects this attempt by an outsider to read her, and she offers no explanation to Miss Hartley about what she means by "pie—by and by." After consistently finding language insufficient, Helga eventually refuses to make herself legible to other people. Similar to the connection drawn between illegibility and insurgency in Saidiya Hartman's essay, Larsen raises the possibility that Helga's refusal to explain herself in legible terms is a moment of resistance, even as the Deep South seems to entrap her.

The final scene of *The Street* similarly shows Lutie's rejection of the language taught to her by White communities, concluding with the prospect of her creating new modes of language and legibility for herself. As Lutie leaves Bub behind and rides a train to Chicago, she begins to draw "a series of circles that flowed into each other. She remembered that when she was in grammar school the children were taught to get the proper slant to their writing, to get the feel of a pen in their hands, by making these same circles" (Petry 373). Lutie therefore engages in an act of writing, however what she writes on the window is not readable as text. When Lutie recalls her teacher's exasperation, telling Lutie, "I don't know why they have us bother to teach your people to write" (373), Petry makes clear that Lutie's acquisition of language comes from a White instructor. Similar to Helga's eventual refusal to explain herself, Lutie's writing in this scene denies readability and therefore, resists the language that is both understandable to White communities and taught to Lutie by White institutions of education. While Lutie's incomprehensible circles seem regressive, Petry also includes a depiction of learning with her reference to Lutie's grammar school. Lutie therefore engages in an act of writing that simultaneously suggests illegibility and the beginnings of language. As Lutie forgoes readable letters and words in favour of these circles, she returns to a moment of language learning and thus presents the possibility of developing new modes of legibility.

Saidiya Hartman's depiction of the uprising of incarcerated Black women in Lowell Cottage similarly demonstrates that what seems illegible

to White readers can simultaneously function as the formation of a new language for marginalized peoples. Hartman writes that "to those outside the circle it was a din without melody or center" (484), however the noise at Lowell Cottage also "provided the language in which they lamented their lot" (484). While this noise is unintelligible and unpleasant to non-Black spectators, Hartman shows that the women at Lowell Cottage find a new mode of communication in these sounds. Both Lutie and the incarcerated women of Lowell Cottage therefore defy White frameworks for legibility, creating new forms of expression for themselves that remain inaccessible to those outside the circle.

In *Quicksand* and *The Street*, Helga Crane and Lutie Johnson struggle to find belonging in various racial communities, discovering that legibility is often a requirement to acceptance within larger cultural formations. To be made legible, however, involves a process of negation that erases individuality in favour of reductive categories. While both texts highlight the way in which upper-class White circles deny Black women their selfhood, the texts also feature moments in which their protagonists resist these standards of legibility. Just as Hartman's "The Anarchy of Colored Girls" figures the music of resistance at Lowell Cottage as an unconventional language for incarcerated Black women, Petry and Larsen's novels open up the possibility and necessity of cultivating new linguistic forms that allow marginalized existences to render themselves visible and legible.

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IS THAT A XENOMORPH IN YOUR PANTS, OR ARE YOU JUST HAPPY TO SEE ME? CROSS-SPECIES DESIRE AND INTIMACY IN LESLIE F. STONE'S "THE CONQUEST OF GOLA" AND OCTAVIA BUTLER'S "BLOODCHILD"

Wenying Wu

While some people content themselves to the drudgery of exploring alien planets, the truly intrepid explore alien bodies. Just as space exploration cannot be isolated from the questions of exploitation that haunt exploratory ventures, xenophilic sex cannot be separated from the power struggles emergent at cross-species encounters. Wenying Wu's essay explores the implications of cross-species intimacy by considering two texts that situate human-alien sexual relations within a network of power relations. Leslie Stone's 1931 story, "The Conquest of Gola" depicts the aftermath of a failed human invasion of the matriarchal planet of Gola, or Venus. The initial sexual incompatibility of the humans and Golans inadvertently shifts into a moment of possibility, in which the reified sexual dynamics of both species become malleable. Octavia Butler's "Bloodchild," published in 1984, depicts aliens and humans actively mediating and reinforcing their erotic and reproductive relations. In that story, the alien Tlic nurture social roles for humans because they require human bodies to house their larvae. Despite the stories' differences, they offer insight into the social construction of sexual dynamics and the complications of incorporating otherness into the erotic life, as well as the many novel possibilities produced by an acceptance of sexual difference. Alien contact narratives dramatize a particularly extreme iteration of the encounter with the Other, allowing us to reflect on the more mundane Others of our less fantastical lives. How do we confront the Other, incorporate the Other, and reject the Other? More importantly, how do we love them?

The humans and aliens of Leslie F. Stone's "The Conquest of Gola" and Octavia Butler's "Bloodchild" undergo a special kind of close encounter, engendering unique dynamics of sexuality and intimacy at the frontiers of species. Stone's story is narrated by a female Golan, who inhabits a planet where male members of the species are subservient to female members. The cross-species sexual dynamics develop from the attempted invasions of Gola—or Venus, in the Earth lexicon—by humanity, with their alien performances of dominant and aggressive masculinity. Butler, on the other hand, explores a planet where the bug-like Tlic alien(s) use humans as reproductive incubators. While "The Conquest of Gola" and "Bloodchild" both involve humans—known as Detaxalans by the Golans and Terrans by the Tlic—as implicitly sexual commodities, the two stories present different degrees of human incorporation into alien societies; both texts expose the socially constructed aspects of sexual desire—at the interplay of power, intimacy, and otherness. This essay will trace the processes by which sexual dynamics develop between humans and aliens, whether by accident or by design. The revulsion and attraction that emerges from the nexus of the cross-species encounters in these texts, suggests the dual potential of the Other for both estrangement and attachment, producing embraces with the alien that move beyond alienation.

In "The Conquest of Gola," the dynamic of sexual desire between the Detaxalans and the Golans is initially characterized by mutual repulsion, foregrounding species-specific standards of beauty and desirability. When the human Detaxalans arrive on the planet, the Golans are unimpressed. At first contact, the Golan narrator notes she had "never before […] seen such a poorly organized body" (Stone 100), a body that she characterizes as "horrifying" (Stone 101). The repulsion that the narrator experiences is grounded in otherness. For the narrator, the appearances of the Detaxalans offer a startling contrast to the familiar Golan body with its "beautiful golden coats" and its "movable eyes" (Stone 101), among other traits. The narrator's specific description of Golan coats of fur as "beautiful" highlights its role as a standard of aesthetic appeal—a standard utterly incompatible with the bare-skinned Detaxalans. The narrative challenges the universality of human beauty standards through its focus on the Golan perception of Detaxalan strangeness, but the antipathy is mutual. While she asserts Golan beauty, the narrator acknowledges that Golans are likely "freaks to those freakish Detaxalans" as well (Stone 101).

Despite the incompatibility between conventional Golan standards of beauty and the bodies of Detaxalans, the Golans use male Detaxalans as sexually coded commodities. After they repel the Detaxalan invasion, Golans treat the captured invaders as objects without agency, to be "doled out to [the Golan queen Geble's] favourites" (Stone 105). Although the text does not articulate an explicitly sexual cross-species relationship, Geble "found some pleasure in having the [Detaxalans] around her and kept three in her own chambers so she could delve into their brains as she pleased" (Stone 105). The pleasure Geble finds is rooted specifically in her telepathic domination of the Detaxalans, but the Detaxalans still occupy the intimate physical space of the queen's personal chambers. As such, the psychic domination takes on dimensions of sexual domination, and the Golans situate the Detaxalan prisoners within the role of the Gola's "gentle consorts" (Stone 99). Unlike Geble, the narrator finds that her own "interest in [her Detaxalan slave Jon] soon waned, since [she] had now come of age and was allowed to have two consorts" (Stone 105). The narrator's interest in her new Golan consort supplants her initial attentiveness to Jon, implying a similar sexually oriented underpinning for those two relationships. Jon's novelty fails to sustain her sexual desire when compared to the conventional attraction of a Golan man. The Golan experiment of cross-species sexual desire is a failure, at least for the narrator; Jon exists superficially as a consort—a sexual commodity—but a Detaxalan-Golan incompatibility prevents the sexual fulfilment of the consort role.

While the narrator's lack of intimacy with Jon seems to refute the potential of cross-species sexual desire, the final in-person confrontation between Jon and the narrator complicates that interpretation. During the second Detaxalan invasion, the narrator wakes up to "the ugly form of Jon bending over [her]" and expresses surprise since "it was not his habit to arouse [her]" (Stone 106). The narrator's initial reaction to Jon and assertion of his ugliness further demonstrates the failure of the Jon-as-consort paradigm. However, this confrontation subverts established dynamics between Jon and the narrator; Jon occupies a position of power and aggression instead of the expected passivity of a consort. Jon cages the narrator, an action she misinterprets as an embrace, and this position of physical dominance over the narrator reveals Jon's strength. She then briefly experiences "a new emotion"—a novel sort of arousal—in "the pleasure to be had in the arms of a

strong man" (Stone 106). This moment potentiates a universal magnetism of dominant masculinity that transcends species boundaries, affecting even a species that values passivity in men. The narrator's reaction seems to challenge the inevitability of species-specific standards of sexual attraction. This new power dynamic allows the narrator to conceive an erotic masculinity divorced from male passivity. The mutability of the Golan erotics of submissive masculinity serves as a compelling commentary on the manufactured nature of the human conception of passivity as an aspect of female desirability. The glimpse of cross-species sexual attraction provided by the confrontation is not one-sided; Jon "recognized the look in [the narrator's] eyes" as pleasure, and "for the moment he was tender" (Stone 106). This encounter between the narrator and Jon demonstrates a shift in extant configurations of sexual desire, suggesting that present configurations are not inevitable. The introduction of unprecedented orientations of the bodies and power can incite transformations of the sexual status quo.

Despite momentary eroticism between the narrator and Jon, their potential for mutually-desired sexual intimacy is never actualized; the reassertion of Jon's purpose—to imprison the narrator in preparation for the invasion—ends the possibility of sexual congress. Even so, it represents the potential for cross-species sexual intimacy within an unorthodox dynamic. Perhaps the original failure of the cross-species experiment was the attempted incorporation of the Detaxalan male into established Golan sexual relations. A Detaxalan male cannot perform to the expectations of a Golan consort; after all, the consort role originally existed with species specificity. Only within a reconstituted dynamic is there potential for the actualization of sexual desire. In the narrator and Jon's case, that power dynamic is reversed; the consort becomes dominant, and his owner subdued.

Dynamics of dominance and sexuality are at the centre of Octavia Butler's "Bloodchild." This story details the coming-of-age experience of Gan, a 'Terran' or human child chosen from birth by the Tlic alien T'Gatoi as a carrier for her offspring. The Tlic require mammalian hosts for reproductive purposes and have discovered in Terrans a more effective alternative to the livestock they had historically used (Butler 765), which had begun rejecting their young. The Tlic confine Terrans on a Preserve for their ostensible protection, with T'Gatoi's political faction dictating the distribution of Terrans (Butler 757). The

Tlic construct new paradigms of Terran-Tlic intimacy and sexual attraction while also maintaining Tlic power over Terrans. Unlike the accidental flash of interspecies sexual attraction that occurs between the narrator of "The Conquest of Gola" and Jon, sexually coded cross-species intimacy in "Bloodchild" is essential to Terran-Tlic relations; the Terrans are effectively second-class citizens or even chattel on the Tlic planet, and the Tlic rely on and exploit Terrans for the sexual act of breeding (Butler 765). Gan articulates his experience of implantation with Tlic eggs in strongly sexual terms. In a Gola-reminiscent reversal of the heteronormative conventions for human sex, T'Gatoi penetrates Gan—with a sting that Gan, using suggestively erotic diction, characterizes as "so easy going in" (Butler 766). To insert the egg, T'Gatoi "undulated slowly against [Gan]" (Butler 766), evoking more imagery of sexual pleasure in the practical action of reproduction.

For Gan's relationship with T'Gatoi, the function of reproduction and the pleasure of sexual congress are deeply entwined. Nevertheless, their cross-species intimacy is not inevitable. T'Gatoi must deliberately cultivate a sense of naturalness in the sexual dynamic between herself and Gan, using strategies that suggest real-world parallels to pedophilic sexual grooming. The intimate act of a Tlic embrace—where one half of a Tlic's many insect-like limbs securely enclose a Terran—is one aspect of Terran-Tlic intimacy that spotlights the otherness of the Tlic to the Terran. While Gan enjoys the embrace, most of his family dislikes it, claiming that "it made them feel caged" (Butler 757). The alien intimacy is intentionally restrictive. When T'Gatoi initiates an embrace with Gan's mother, she "meant to cage [his] mother" (Butler 757). Gan's receptiveness to the act of caging was deliberately nurtured. Gan "was first caged within T'Gatoi's many limbs only three minutes after [his] birth" (Butler 758); T'Gatoi conditions Gan from infancy to expect and enjoy a restrictive embrace. Indeed, T'Gatoi, by involving herself in "all the phases of [Gan's] development" (Butler 758), has so deeply familiarized Gan with Tlic otherness that he does not fear it. In cases where other Tlic, "anxious and ignorant, demand an adolescent" as a reproductive partner, Gan goes as far as to corroborate for them the efficacy of raising a Terran from infancy (Butler 758). The strength and ease of the intimacy between T'Gatoi and Gan requires reinforcement from birth. For the Tlic, the construction of the social context for cross-species sexual relationships is a comprehensive and on-going process.

The Tlic supplement Terran-Tlic sexual dynamics with their use of "sterile eggs," a mind-altering substance that Terrans can consume as an allegedly "harmless pleasure" (Butler 756). Gan views the consumption of the egg as something pleasurable and familiar, a perception that T'Gatoi has actively nurtured; only "a few days later [after his birth], [he] was given [his] first taste of egg" (Butler 758). The provision of the pleasure-inducing eggs by T'Gatoi is an intimate social ritual between T'Gatoi and Gan's family; the feeding of her eggs to Gan's family is a central activity of her visits. The egg's many physiological benefits, including "prolonged life, prolonged vigor," accompanied by an altered state of pleasant "drifting and dreaming" (Butler 756), constructs an association between the Tlic and the experience of pleasure. That pleasure, nonsexual as it is, bears resemblance to postcoital bliss, when sexual pleasure results in an altered state of "drifting and dreaming" after the act. The ritual of the egg reifies the role of pleasure within the Tlic-Terran dynamic and associates the pleasure with reproduction. Due to its origin from Tlic reproductive cycles, sterile eggs still signify biogenesis; Gan gains pleasure by taking into himself an embodiment of the Tlic reproductive process. To receive the Tlic in a reproductive context, then, is to receive pleasure.

As much as the egg pleasures its Terran consumer, it also primes the Terran to pleasure the Tlic consumer of the Terran sexual product. The eggs provide the Tlic with the ability to assert control over the mind and the body of Terrans, giving pleasure and halting the aging process, respectively. Gan's mother's refusal of the eggs—an assertion of personal agency over her mind and body—is inexplicable to Gan, who wonders why "[his] mother seemed content to age before she had to" (Butler 756). The Tlic motivations for stalling human aging are not altruistic. After all, the Tlic are economically and sexually invested in the maintenance of human youthfulness, which is a quality that determines the shelf-life of humans as sexual and reproductive commodities. The egg is a Tlic exertion of control over the Terran-Tlic social dynamic and the supply of commodifiable Terrans.

The Tlic's use of the mind-altering eggs echoes the role of female Golans telepathic abilities in their subjugation of male Golans and Detaxalans. The inherent privacy of human consciousness makes the mind an intimate sphere, and Geble's Detaxalan slaves bring her pleasure by being available for

her to "delve into their brains" (Stone 105). Thus, in both texts, dynamics of pleasure and the mental tools of dominance are intertwined. The ability to assert influence over another's mind is shaded with connotations of sexual pleasure, demonstrating a unity between the dynamics of sex and power. In contrast to the female Golan attempt to treat Golan and Detaxalan men as interchangeable inhabitants of a uniform power dynamic, the Tlic consciously generate and shape a unique role for their humans. On a surface level, Terrans in the Tlic world assume the reproductive role previously held by livestock. However, although Terrans are commodified and penned off in the Preserve much like animals (Butler 757), Terrans do not merely supplant livestock. Gan perceives the role of Terrans in Tlic society as "necessities, status symbols, and an independent people" (Butler 757), a result of the Tlic effort to create a unique and complex role for the alien inhabitants of their planet. The impression of self-determination distinguishes the Terran-Tlic dynamic from the unambiguous power dynamic of Tlic and cattle.

While the Terran-Tlic intersection generates wholly new dynamics that accommodate interspecies otherness, "The Conquest of Gola" demonstrates the failure of rigid social roles to reconcile the otherness of an alien subject. It is the female Golan assumption of the interchangeability of Golan and Detaxalan men that allows the Detaxalans to incite an internal rebellion. The narrator "gave [Jon] complete freedom of [her] house" (Stone 106), assuming that the Detaxalan men would be no threat. Golan women's expectation that the Detaxalan captives embody the same docility of the "sweet, gentle males" (Stone 100) within their own species allows them to be blindsided by Detaxalan aggression. Furthermore, the social role is not only mutable for the Other; the male Golans also transform and subvert their social role upon the encounter with the alien, attempting to rebel against the Golan status quo and achieve a degree of independence and freedom. The "combined mental concentration" (Stone 106) of female Golans is necessary to end the rebellion. The social dynamics and roles that underpin the sexual life of a society are not immune to disruption and require active maintenance on both Gola and the Tlic planet.

Despite the accommodation of otherness in the Terran-Tlic dynamic, the Tlic too must mediate moments of antagonism between sexual partners. When Gan witnesses the painful labour of a Terran by the name of

Bram Lomas, the reproductive process—which Gan had conceptualized as "a good and necessary thing" (Butler 761)—becomes a source of terror. The Tlic carried by Bram Lomas threaten to eat through Lomas' flesh due to the absence of their mother, who can anesthetize him and extract the worms (Butler 761). Lomas represents the potential of alien penetration to result in "pain and terror and maybe death" (Butler 766). The experience also casts T'Gatoi in an unnervingly alien light. As Gan observes T'Gatoi's extraction of the young—noting how "T'Gatoi bit away the egg case, licked away the blood"—he wonders if T'Gatoi "liked the taste" of human blood (Butler 761). This incident highlights for Gan T'Gatoi's otherness and her potential to destructively consume Terrans. In the past, T'Gatoi had mediated her own behaviour in front of Gan. The scene is a breakdown of that compartmentalization, as Gan seems to realize aspects of Tlic otherness that are irreconcilable with Terran values.

As a result of this realization, Gan engages in a brief rebellion against T'Gatoi that results in an assertion of his will over the progress of their relationship. Taking up his family's hidden rifle (Butler 764), Gan transgresses against the Tlic law that restricts gun ownership for humans (Butler 759). When T'Gatoi enters, Gan challenges her on consent in Terran-Tlic relations, claiming that "no one ever asks [the Terrans]" and "[T'Gatoi] never asked [him]" (Butler 764). Eventually, T'Gatoi and Gan settle on a sort of partnership; Gan assumes his prescribed role but T'Gatoi allows some disobedience. Even as Gan accepts the implantation of the eggs, he demands T'Gatoi to "leave [the rifle] here" in the room and "accept the risk" of violence as a consequence of "dealing with a partner" (Butler 765). Gan later rejects T'Gatoi's belief that "Terrans should be protected from seeing" Tlic births (Butler 766), instead suggesting Terrans should be "shown [births] when [they're] young kids" (Butler 766), advocating for an informational transparency more typical of the dynamics of partnership than of exploitation.

In spite of Gan's achievement of some agency in his relationship with T'Gatoi, this climactic confrontation reveals an avenue of Tlic power in the ability of T'Gatoi to leverage her and Gan's emotional connection for Gan's acceptance of his role. T'Gatoi argues that Terrans "aren't animals to [the Tlic]" by pointing out familial intimacy—that the Tlic "join [their] families to [Terrans]" (Butler 765). Gan's acceptance of his role is also affected

by sexual jealousy over T'Gatoi—a desire to "keep [T'Gatoi] to [him]self" (Butler 766)—which shows the successful cultivation of sexual desire between Tlic and Terrans. Within this context, is Gan's suggestion of further interspecies sexual education for Terrans an actualization of his agency, or is it a formula to further groom Terrans into accepting a Tlic-defined sexual role? Is Gan's perception of a partnership—rather than exploitation—between himself and T'Gatoi more or less troubling than the explicit nature of the enslavement of the Detaxalan captives?

Alien-human encounters serve to illustrate the socially constructed and mutable nature of sexual attraction and intimacy. In both texts, the question of interspecies sexuality is intertwined with the question of interspecies power dynamics and exploitation. While "The Conquest of Gola" dramatizes a failure to incorporate humans into a pre-established sexual order, "Bloodchild" depicts a brief rebellion against the status quo that results in subtle shifts of the interspecies relationship. An alien species can be stimulated by novelty or grow familiar through exposure, but neither text dismisses the possibility of shock and horror in otherness. Then again, human-to-human sexual congress—though not as xenobiologically alien—is also an encounter between the self and the Other. And, from that encounter, what transformations and disintegrations, what alien lives will be born?

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