

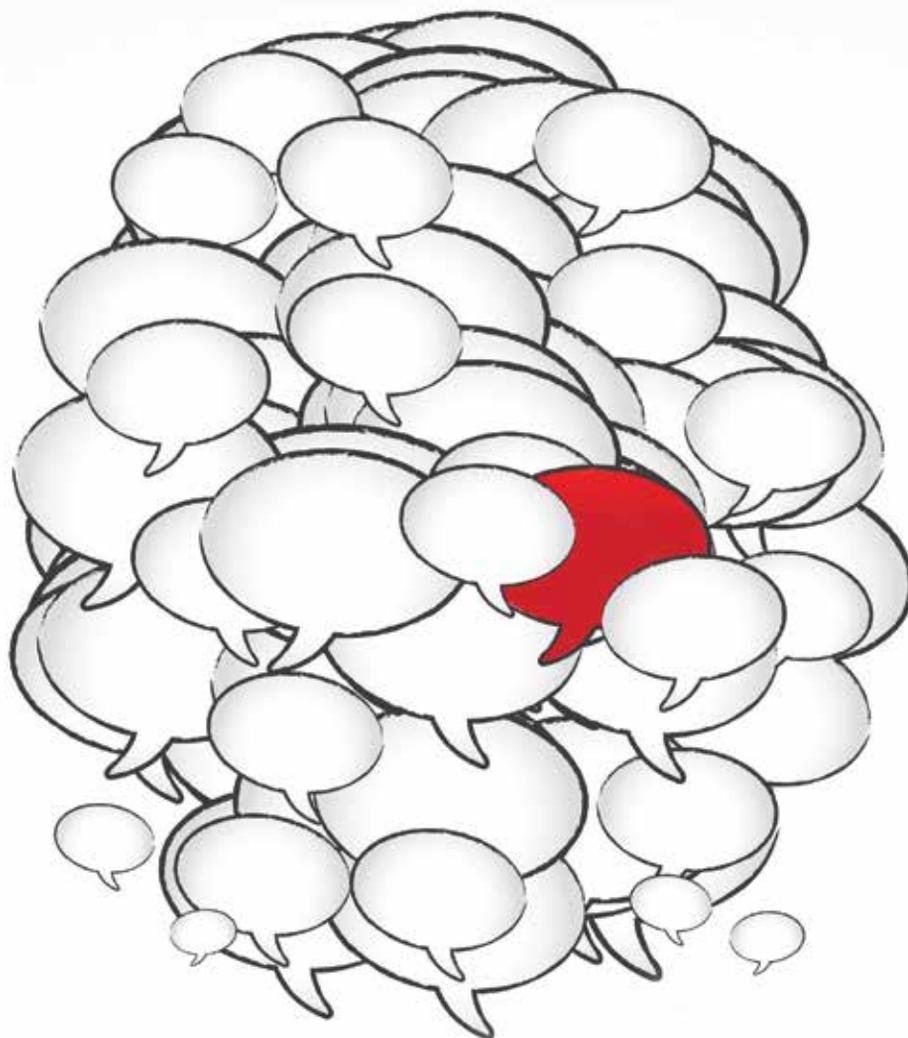
SHIPPENSBURG UNIVERSITY

FALL 2014 VOLUME 30:1

# PROTEUS

A JOURNAL OF IDEAS

Deviance in Culture and Society





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FALL 2014



*An ancient Greek sea divinity, herdsman of seals, Proteus could be elusive by changing his form at will appearing as a lion, a serpent, a boar, water, or a tall tree. However when those who caught him succeeded in holding him fast, Proteus assumed his proper shape of an old man and told the truth.*

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DEVIANCE IN CULTURE AND SOCIETY

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# REVIEW EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

STEPHANIE A. JIRARD  
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At its base, deviance is passionate people coloring outside the lines of socially-acceptable behavior. The French sociologist Émile Durkheim believed acting within the limited boundaries of what is considered “normal” serves as the glue of social cohesion: act nice, you get to join the in-crowd. Act in a way that everyone disapproves of, you get voted off the island. Act as a criminal, you are totally isolated and get to rot in prison. In his *New York Times* opinion piece “The Cult Deficit,” social critic Ross Douhat reviewed work that examined the recent rise of American religious and entrepreneurial mediocrity with the concomitant decline in the number of crazy cults – such as Jonestown in Guyana and Heaven’s Gate in California. Douhat concluded that the lack of an obsessive “wild fringe” indicated a “declining creativity writ large.” Without deviants who marvel at the secrets of the universe or the without the next Thomas Edison, someone who acts irrationally to achieve their vision, society is unable to maintain its healthy balance. Just as the law of physics requires mass and its force, the law of deviance requires regulation and its rejection. We are fortunate to have a collection of writers in this issue of *Proteus* who explore the concept of deviance as represented in art, literature, photography, folklore tradition, poetry, and personal experience.

We begin our journey in the nineteenth century, where no one anticipated the scientific, spiritual, and social progress the era now represents. As British rule infected native cultures from Asia to Africa with its language, dress, and customs, back home in England, how-to manuals shaped the domestic lives of middle-class women seeking acceptance through obedience to uniformity. Ellen Everhart shows us that beyond the popular tack that domestic manuals were read as guideposts for ideal feminine behavior within the confines of the home, an integral part of these bestsellers involved uplifting the relationships between humans and their animals. Discussing the animal world gave women scientific information that brought their minds into the world beyond their front door. The manuals were written for people with disposable income and the education to buy and read them. Middle class identity was formed around a core set of values. In opposition to the common belief that the manuals represented women and animals as not-so-smart things society had to con-

trol, Everhart illuminates how true deviance lay in women reading the manuals to negotiate animal control, which, in turn, elevated her own agency. Through the domestic manual, Victorian women learned to navigate their way outside domestic social isolation.

If the home was a female prison, then the body was the prison for the female mind. By the late nineteenth century, medical technology sought to capture and codify physical pathology. Hysteria (Greek for uterus) was a uniquely female collection of symptoms that worked nicely to label women as “crazy.” As Michael P. Vicaro demonstrates, the photographic history of hysteria supports the commodification of the female hysteric as “a freak, a con, a degenerate,” far removed from the white bourgeois norm her body was supposed to represent. *Psychology Today* reports that a popular Victorian era cure for hysteria was for physicians to physically manipulate female genitalia to bring about “paroxysms”—sexual release for a return to health (Castleman 2013). Vicaro examines the power of photography to identify deviance and track the restoration of well-being that, sometimes, hysterics could never achieve.

The dogma that females were incapable of sexual pleasure encouraged the social norm of accepting female subjugation for male sexual pleasure. Amanda Charlene Lee’s contribution on Dorothy Allison’s *Bastard Out of Carolina* focuses on Allison’s choice of setting in the 1950s, which deftly captures the difference between the heteronormative consensus defining the ideal nuclear family and the violence and abnormal sexual desires forced upon children transforming the female body into a deviant vessel. According to the French philosopher Michel Foucault, power management around the naked body and sex involves punishment, regulation, and control over individual conduct. That is, in its natural state, sex may be deviant. Claiming independence from the patriarchal norm is feminism’s touchstone. Women who chose to speak truth to power, as Lee notes was historically unavailable to those suffering from physical and sexual abuse, suffer their own torments. As the acerbic feminist Camille Paglia said in *The Quotable Bitch*:

Let’s get rid of Infirmity Feminism, with its bedlam of bellyachers, anorexics, bulimics, depressives, rape victims, and incest survivors. Feminism has become a catch-all vegetable drawer where

bunches of clingy sob sisters can store their moldy neuroses (qtd. in Shiers 2007, 167).

If feminism is about self-determination and such self-expression is suppressed by the normative behavior of male/female relationships, then as Paglia says, female independence once stagnated becomes a “moldy neurosis.” If the societal norm is for females to be compliant and accede to the wishes of others, a woman’s rejection of the norm is to control the amount of food she eats, to the complete deviant end of even starving herself to death. Almas Kahn dissects Frank Bidart’s poem about Ellen West who, as a patient of the Swiss psychiatrist Dr. Ludwig Binswanger, consumed 60-70 packs of laxatives a day to satisfy her passion to lose weight until she eventually died. In the poem, Bidart writes in Ellen’s voice about how her husband is a fool for marrying her, as she has no skills as a wife: she asks plaintively, “Why am I a girl?” But Kahn takes a closer look at how Bidart manipulates the parameters of poetry mechanics to interject his own personal experiences. Mixing Bidart’s own voice with the one he gives Ellen “is one of the poem’s many convolutions,” a necessary exercise that deviates from pure fiction to answer the larger existential questions about the meaning of life and personal truth.

Personal truth and the definition of authenticity are the central focus of Todd Richardson’s examination of deviance from a folklorist’s perspective. On one hand, folklore is the legends, music, proverbs, fairy tales, and oral stories that define and validate a socially-acceptable identity or, on the other hand, are used to marginalize and define “the other.” Deviance is defined by transgressed norms and boundaries, and the victors get to write history. Speaking as a “western academic writing in a Western tradition,” Richardson acknowledges the power to accept or reject the deviant is dependent, wholly, on one’s station in life. He artfully exposes the inherent power of the collective to both define authenticity and de-legitimize any person’s experience as deviant by defining it false, a fraud, a total fake.

Things that are fake and the authority to separate fantasy from reality are showcased by Nicolas Michaud’s piece on Samuel Beckett’s rejection of narrative prosthesis in using the disabled as deviant. Narrative prosthesis—using disability as a narrative choice to define character and distill plot lines—is a way to deconstruct thought and disembowel self-identity. In literature, prosthesis is used as shorthand

in expressing opposite concepts, in sickness and in health, for example. Michaud argues that Beckett’s rejection of narrative prosthesis in using disability as an emotional shortcut elevates the disabled from the deviant realm to the normative mainstream. Michaud illustrates how Beckett places his deviant character, a misanthrope who travels through many of Beckett’s stories, on equal footing as other Beckettian characters making him “normal.”

Fittingly, Anne Lovering Round’s piece on Frank O’Hara’s 29-line elegy for the incomparable blues singer and tragic addict Billie Holiday exposes the time-space continuum as a way to transmit and communicate deviance. Round shows how O’Hara’s poetic choices invite the reader to join him in what is clearly a salute to Holiday’s talent gone too soon. O’Hara confines his work to a didactic poetic structure which he then disrupts by interjecting his own personal memory of Billie. By switching from a reverential tribute to a warm memory and back, O’Hara mimics Bidart’s transgression with Ellen West, switching voices and personae, as Round observes, “in this moment of deviant and wishfully conceived temporality.” Deviance is all about transgressing boundaries, and Round shows us that O’Hara’s choice to color outside the lines in his elegy creates what is, for him, a loving reverence for a lady who sang the blues.

Together, the *Proteus* contributors clarify for us that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. The passion and drive to create masterpieces originates from the same emotional wellspring as the criminal’s compulsion to commit random acts of violence. Society chooses to accept or reject either end of the passion spectrum based on the collective agreement of where healthy boundaries begin and end. Is it a supportive commune or a crazy-wild cult? There are no answers to how much deviance, positive or negative, society is willing to tolerate. The authors’ considerations of deviance at both the micro and macro level is, at least, a window through which we can begin to seek the answers.

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# INTELLECTUAL REBELLION: ANIMALS AND DOMESTIC MANUALS IN VICTORIAN BRITAIN

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In Charles Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*, Bella Wilfer describes her fantasy home—the one she would live in if the Harmon fortune had indeed become hers. In a conversation with her husband John Rokesmith,<sup>1</sup> Bella voices her hope that her dream house would have had “an aviary somewhere, of the loveliest little birds, as there was not the smallest doubt in the world that baby noticed birds” (1997, 737). Bella's absolute certainty on this point is strange because presumably she has never been around a baby that was brought up in the presence of kept birds. Although she has a younger sister, Lavinia, there is no indication in the text that Mrs. Wilfer subscribed to the idea that babies notice birds in any way. Her lack of experience here furthers the question: why would a woman with no experience in this type of childrearing suddenly seem so confident that it would work? Why would a new mother want birds to entertain her daughter? What benefits would the birds possibly provide for the mother and child in question? And what do we do with the fact that this new mother has since started investing a lot of time reading “The New British Housewife” to guide her in her new role as both mother and wife (1997, 666)?

As Dickens's last completed novel, and what is arguably one of his most sophisticated, *Our Mutual Friend* stands as one of great importance in terms of Victorian literature. The novel was widely read throughout London, circling the city in twenty serially issued parts. Although birds are scattered throughout this novel (Gaffer, for instance, is referred to as a bird of prey several times) this moment seems different from all the others. In previous scenes, the use of the word “bird” refers directly to physical characteristics or actions of the individual being described. Bella, on the other hand, is not relating the characteristics of a bird to that of her newborn daughter. She is instead insinuating that the birds might assist in her daughter's intellectual development.

The changing relationship between humans and animals in Victorian Britain has been widely studied. The

study of animals became extremely popular in the nineteenth century, involving an increase in the number of public zoos and botanical gardens as well as a changing relationship between people and their pets. Prior to the nineteenth century, many animal collections were private or were only open for viewing to select members of society. Between the growing bourgeoisie and the increasingly intense focus on biological/natural studies, however, zoological parks gradually became more and more popular and available throughout the century. These parks, or “natural history cabinets,” emerged, as Ashton Nichols notes, “out of precisely the combination of scientific curiosity and fascination with spectacle” (2011, 153). Nichols continues to point out that “collecting animals was nothing new;” Henry I started the first royal British menagerie that was later moved into the Tower of London (154). The first public zoo, the Zoological Society of London, was founded in 1826, but was not fully open to the public until 1846 (Ibid.). This long term relationship with the keeping of wild animals does not indicate anything other than the fact that human beings have always been interested in things that we consider to be wild or ‘other’ than ourselves. Much of the contemporary research revolves around these central changes, largely because they signaled a shift in human thinking with regard to animals.

John Berger talks about this shift quite a bit, highlighting the fact that prior to the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century, “animals constituted the first circle of what surrounded men... they were with man at the centre of his world” (1980, 1). Animals were not seen, as they were from the nineteenth century forward, as merely a means to an end. They were oracles instead of furs, and magical instead of meat and by-products. Eventually, as we industrialized, we pushed animals from our central consciousness into our periphery. We no longer relied on them to perform the daily tasks we needed them so desperately for centuries ago; we had replaced them. Animals became disposable commodities: we thought about them only in

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terms of their usefulness to us. We employed them in our factories, tortured them in our zoos and vivisection tables, and discussed them as though they were the products they supplied. The bear became his fur, the chicken her eggs.

Scientific study also came into a more prominent position throughout the nineteenth century, both in England and across Europe. Between “the great impact of Darwin’s theory of evolution, the struggle between science and theology and the growing acceptance of science’s claims to jurisdiction in almost all realms of human understanding,” it is clear that scientific study slowly overwhelmed nearly all aspects of Victorian intellectual life (Heyck 1982, 81). Science pushed the boundaries of theology, altered established intellectual institutions while creating new ones, and provided a model for the acquisition of knowledge (Heyck 1982, 82). Science became such a prominent aspect in Victorian thought that it even began to crop up in popular texts, including domestic manuals (Paradis 1981, ix). Drawing on the influx of scientific information, domestic manuals ultimately came to include sections within them that touched on specific scientific areas. The most frequently discussed areas stemmed from the study of taxonomy, as this particular branch of biology was among the most popular science of the nineteenth century.

Despite the depth of research, contemporary scholarship totally fails to address the role that domestic manuals played in the changing relationship between humans and their animals.<sup>2</sup> These manuals became wildly popular in the nineteenth century, largely due to the rapid growth of the middle class throughout the century. The new middle class desperately sought to assimilate to and adopt the supposed ideals of the upper class, despite having never been educated on how to live according to such standards. Women were not, in reading these texts, searching simply for detailed information on the various complexities of running a household. Women were reading these manuals to learn what the ideal British Housewife would be: how would she dress? How would she behave? What would she cook for dinner? How would she raise her children? The question of how animals complicate these issues has remained unanswered and, in effect, unasked.

In this project I am going to discuss how the inclusion of animals within the context of the domestic manual changes our framework for understanding such texts. Manuals that included a significant discussion of the animal world were, by and large, more progressive than those that did not. They encouraged women to pursue a scientific education and pushed them past the domestic space and into the outside world. I will examine three domestic manuals: Mrs. Henry Mackarness’s *The Young Lady’s Book: A Manual of Amusements, Exercises, Studies, and Pursuits*; *The Young Lady’s Book: Manual of Elegant Recreations, Exercises, and Pursuits* (author unknown); and Isabella Beeton’s *The Book of Household Management*. Each manual includes sections that discuss the relationship between women and animals, providing a range of biological information. These texts cover a variety of opinions about the level of female interaction with animals in terms of what is acceptable, mov-

ing from the lowest level of interaction in Mackarness’s text to the highest level in the anonymous text. Beeton’s text is perhaps the most interesting: as the most popular manual in the nineteenth century, its impact on Victorian society is impossible to ignore.<sup>3</sup> The very fact that Beeton seems to be hedging towards a more progressive way of constructing the feminine sphere makes her text an extremely important study.

Through this project, I hope to illuminate the fact that domestic manuals are not the texts that we commonly believe them to be. These manuals have largely been read in light of their insistence on the female ideal of the “angel of the house.” The idea of the “separate spheres” is often highlighted, drawing our attention to the fact that these manuals created a private, closed-off space in which women were to reside, effectively separating them from the public, open world men to which men had access. Women were expected, and encouraged, to put all their energy into perfecting the home: to spend even a small amount of time neglecting her household duties in favor of more intellectual pursuits was to lead her home and family into ruin (Hellerstein et al. 1981, 278). But reading manuals this way allows us to ignore what some manuals accomplish. While many manuals adhere almost exactly to the standard point of view, some deviate from this formula and do something that we would never have expected: they encourage women to gain intellectual footing. By teaching women to navigate social rules, domestic manuals, like Beeton’s and *The Young Lady’s Book*, break out of this tradition and give women the tools necessary to pursue knowledge based in something other than household management.

## Domestic Manuals

Throughout the nineteenth century, domestic manuals flooded the book market, each with the goal to educate the middle-class woman and mother so that she might run a successful household. These manuals discussed a wide variety of subjects, but most talked about how a woman should run a household, raise her children, and how she could perform well in the various “accomplishments” she was supposed to achieve. Animals were included in these texts in a wide variety of ways, from a total disdain for the inclusion of animals in everyday life to the desire to educate women about them. Mackarness and *The Young Lady’s Book* represent the polar ends of the spectrum in terms of animal inclusion. Mackarness describes and reinforces the conservative, traditional role that a woman holds in the household: she is the center of the domestic space. As such, Mackarness does not encourage young women to even *keep* pets, let alone study them. *The Young Lady’s Book*, on the other hand, encourages women to pursue intellectual studies with the fervor typically reserved for a male. The anonymous author provides women with a large amount of extremely detailed information about the animals discussed and encourages women to not only understand what s/he is presenting, but to engage with it.

Mackarness separates animals from the goals of domestic womanhood almost instantly, pointing out that “[t]he poor animals themselves cannot have justice done them – cannot have the exercise and air, the natural food [indoors]... and in consequence I think they are fitter amusements for young gentlemen than young ladies” (1888, 350). If a girl’s parents permit her to keep a pet, Mackarness notes that the best form of pet keeping is the aviary. The aviary provides two main benefits: it more closely replicates the natural environment of the bird and it provides a certain amount of distance between the young lady and her pets. “Better still,” Mackarness says, “is... to make acquaintance with the birds that are free and on the wing... to watch from a safe distance, the window open, and then kindly hand throwing them the food” (351).<sup>4</sup>

The separation discussed here is furthered by the fact that Mackarness does not include biological information about any animals, but instead talks about them in terms of their capacity for companionship. “The canary,” for example, “is the best to choose for a [lady’s] pet, inasmuch as the cage is not a wretched prison-house to it, as to other birds” (359). Her discussion here largely centers on how to keep a bird in a domestic setting and does not encourage the reader to make any sort of intellectual observations about her pet. Overall, the passage serves as instruction about how to keep the pets, often stating the need to keep them confined and in a space separate from that of the young lady. In effect, the canary is little different from a doll, a dress, or any other commodity with which the young lady might adorn herself or her room.

Mackarness even goes so far as to suggest that an intellectual understanding of animals or the natural world might block a woman’s ability to perform in the domestic space. As a lady was expected to be able to draw or paint, Mackarness agrees that women must have at least some time to observe the natural world, but notes that “[t]o take it up as a serious study, more time would be required to be given to it than young ladies would perhaps like to give” (1888, 77). Women were merely expected to study and memorize the proportions, shapes of features, and other superficial qualities of the animal in order to accurately represent it through illustration. If she has the capacity to think about flowers, animals, or other living beings scientifically, she might begin to represent them in such a manner, effectively removing the ornamental value from her artistic creations. Mackarness’s texts, and others like it, serve as a way to maintain and support the status quo, arguing that nature has established two spheres of life that are supposed to separate men and women. Although she argues, in a sense, for an increased amount of education on the part of women, education is merely a tool to support a woman’s ability to become a domestic as opposed to an intellectual.

*The Young Lady’s Book* is a more rebellious text in that it leans towards a much more progressive view of female education, arguing that women needed to understand subjects on a more scientific level and that outdoor exercise would only serve to improve their livelihood. This text

gives women the tools to go outdoors, collect, and categorize their own shells, insects, or birds, providing them with a practical and applicable understanding of science. The fact that this information is no longer in the realm of the simply intellectual and has moved into the realm of the scientifically practical is significant. The reader is, for instance, informed that the “crop and the gizzard are important parts of birds: the former is a membranaceous bag, which softens and prepares the dry food for the gizzard...” (184). The “Rapacious Birds” on the other hand lack the gizzard, “their stomachs being similar to those of quadrupeds.” Tracking the movement of food through the digestive tract, then, ultimately becomes a way that relationships between different species, forecasting the work that Darwin would publish later in the century. Enabling women to make these connections between living species puts them on the cutting edge of scientific discussion and allows them the ability to establish connections on their own.

The author of *The Young Lady’s Book* provides the reader with extremely detailed passages concerning the various animals s/he is discussing along with accompanying diagrams. These diagrams are not merely present for the sake of adornment; they serve an actual scholarly purpose. These scientific diagrams point out detailed structures on the animals pictured and provide sketches that highlight the different parts that build a specific organ (such as the eye), giving the reader a more anatomical understanding of the animal in question (see figures 1-3). In discussing the illustration of the eye, the reader is given a series of detailed descriptions concerning the labels present on the illustration and a brief discussion of the use of the eye. The image of the eye is extremely detailed, outlining the “axis of the eye... the crystalline lens... [and] the optic nerve,” aspects of a bird’s anatomy that contribute no ornamental value to the animal (185). The amount of scientific background and detailed information presented here pushes these illustrations past sheer ornamental use. Through these illustrations, women are able to get a deep understanding of complex mechanisms and relationships; the structure-function relationship, for example, was becoming increasingly popular as the study of biology headed towards the advent of Darwin’s theory of evolution.

But this text, like the other domestic manuals, establishes a scene in which the reader is essentially educated about the domestic sphere. The author begins her text by pointing out that “home has justly been called ‘her empire,’” leading us away from the progressive, radical stance the author takes later on in the text (*The Young Lady’s Book* 1829, 23). She continues to state that “[m]ental improvement should always be made conducive to moral advancement... [for that] is the great purpose of education,” calling forth the idea that the woman is to be the moral center of the household (23). The author also describes the typical education that girls in the nineteenth century received. After some sections on natural history, the author supplies a few chapters about various finishing skills, including painting, dancing, and ornamental

arts, effectively book-ending the natural history portions with traditional matters of female education. These more conventional subjects seem to be setting up a text with an entirely different purpose than the one that the reader end up getting. Instead of continuing to encourage women to remain entirely in “her empire,” the author begins to encourage intense study of the natural world. How does the author manage to set up and achieve two goals simultaneously? Perhaps more importantly, *why* does the author set out to achieve both of these goals?

By framing the radical information about animals within the context of the domestic manuals, we are able to envision a space in which the two can coexist. Women are able to maintain their mastery of the domestic world while pursuing deep, intellectual gains from the scientific world. The juxtaposition of these topics highlights the fact that these goals are not only mutually inclusive, but are actually able to push and benefit one another. The inclusion of the scientific material in the manuals allows women the opportunity to attain the ideal family life and intellectual prowess while avoiding negative social repercussions. Working in tandem with a woman’s other “accomplishments,” scientific study creates a well-rounded individual who actively engages in a number of conversations. In this period, a woman was educated with the idea that she would use her intellect to attract a husband and, eventually, to educate her children before they were able to attend school (Hellerstein 1981, 16). The introduction scene of *The Young Lady’s Book* touches on this observation, noting that if a woman were well versed in scientific study she would be more likely to attract male attention. The subjects these authors discuss, however, undoubtedly ‘belong’ in the male sphere; their details and practical applications almost immediately removing them from the realm of female possibility. Attempts to pursue education solely for the acquisition of knowledge was considered extremely dangerous: if a woman had access to a “male” education, she would turn her focus away from her familial duties (Hellerstein 1981, 18). By bringing together the study of science with the domestic goals of the manuals, authors are able to ensure that women are properly educated while enabling them to maintain the image of the perfect housewife.

The framework illuminated in *The Young Lady’s Book* also works when applied to the most popular domestic manual in the entire nineteenth century: Isabella Beeton’s *The Book of Household Management*. Beeton provides ample advice to young married women to help them better understand how to run a household. She imparts information on how to pay servants, cook meals, and raise children. This has an entirely practical use: women are expected to use what’s presented in the manual to improve their households and enhance their skills in the domestic sphere. Some sections, however, seem out of place given this context. Sections like “The Natural History of Fishes” and “General Observations on Birds” contain a vast amount of biological knowledge that seem to have no purpose if the goal of the manuals is to train a woman to

be an ideal housewife. For example, the chapter “General Observations on Birds” is separated out into various sections including “The divisions of birds,” “The mechanism which enables birds to [fly],” and “In the construction of the eyes of birds.” Beeton attempts to justify her discussion of these birds in her text—the subsequent chapter does provide methods for cooking domestic birds—but she does not fully address the purpose behind her many scientific observations.

In order to justify the presence of the animals in her text, Beeton states that she “has striven, too, to make [her] work something more than a Cookery book, and have, therefore, on the best authority that I could obtain given an account of the natural history of the animals... we use for food” (1861, iv). Although this seems like a perfectly acceptable reason to include these sections, the fact that it takes up so much of the text is surprising, and it seems to exceed the limits of her explanation. In order to achieve her goals, she could merely have presented the reader with one chapter on the history of all the animals she was planning to discuss without going into the depth that she did. The information that she presents also does not remotely mirror the practical material that she presents in the rest of the text. It serves an entirely intellectual purpose. There must, therefore, be another reason that she has decided to include animal studies that she did not share with the reader. By going through the trouble to locate accurate and current biological material, Beeton ensured that other women would have access to the scientific knowledge she herself seemed to both desire and value. Her inclusion of this information helps demystify the realm of science and biology for woman by bringing it into the domestic sphere that they occupied. This allowed more women to move safely into the world of scientific collection and study, even if they remained in the home to do so.

It could be true that Beeton decided to include sections concerning animals so that mothers could better educate their children about the natural world. Science was taking a larger role in Victorian society and educational programs were changing to accommodate the new desire for children to understand the biological sciences. In order to prepare their children properly for such education, mothers would be encouraged to have at least a basic understanding of natural principles so they could pass them along to their children. The information that Beeton presents, however, is rich with taxonomical detail, more so than one would expect in a manual that is meant to instruct women how to educate their children. Beeton continually points to experts (she mentions Mr. Vigors, a prominent zoologist, in the opening paragraph) and scientific studies as her sources, indicating that the material she is presenting is not only of the highest caliber, but is cutting edge. A woman whose goal is to educate her children might only need to recognize a few species of common English birds and describe a few things about them, but Beeton provides readers with a wide range of species from all over the world with heavy detail about several aspects of their anatomies. If this information isn’t

present in the text to help women educate their children (and there is no textual evidence to suggest that there is) why does Beeton choose to include it? What goal does it satisfy? How does it fit within the context of the text?

These questions reveal that Beeton is not quite so dissimilar from the author of *The Young Lady's Book*, despite the common assumptions that are made about *The Book of Household Management*. Like the anonymous author, Beeton is working within the structures of both the domestic manual and society to provide women with the information they need to transcend intellectual boundaries and remain socially respectable. By allowing women to access scientific knowledge through the medium of the domestic manual, the overall social effect is much less: the material is not deemed to be nearly as dangerous because it is thought to be tied, in some way, to a woman's domestic duties. Both Beeton and *The Young Lady's Book* manage to make loose connections to domestic life; Beeton states that she is seeking to educate women about the animals that fill their lives while the anonymous author suggests that women with such knowledge are more likely to attract a husband. But the amount and quality of the information far surpasses the reasons that both authors provide, hinting that, though these reasons might work well enough, they are obviously not the entire reason for the inclusion of such material.

To give women access to scientific knowledge, especially to such detailed information, indicates a certain amount of faith that women would understand what is being presented to them. This is particularly interesting considering that many women did not receive an education that would prepare them for this level of scientific detail. Although middle-class women, to whom these manuals were directed, did receive more education as the century progressed, it was still not equivalent to the education that their male counterparts received. Supplying young women and mothers with such understanding serves two central purposes: first, it circumvents the process of formal education and provides women with the worldly knowledge they deserved; it also asserted that there was something fundamentally wrong with the education that was being offered and strove, in some small way, to overcome it.

It is important to note that the type of science being discussed in these manuals is biology, based on the study of plants, animals, and taxonomy. Although this scientific field is by no means simple, it is arguably easier to access than the field of physics, for example, which was also coming into its own during the nineteenth century. There are many possible reasons for the lack of more theoretical sciences in the domestic manuals. It is likely that authors would not have had access to experts in these areas and thus would not have felt comfortable discussing it in their texts; it is also possible that, because the field was becoming increasingly complicated during the nineteenth century, laypeople were not well acquainted with the field. This second explanation seems extremely important, especially given the way that taxonomy and biology absolutely invaded society in the nineteenth century with the

increased popularity of the public zoo. It seems, though, that one of the most important reasons for the absence of theoretical science is the lack of "justification" for its presence. Taxonomy and biology can be easily included because the material can be directly related to a goal of the English housewife. Beeton exemplifies this ideal when she states that the information she is presenting on animals will help women better understand the animals they will be cooking for dinner. Physics, on the other hand, cannot be easily connected to any particular household duty and thus would be identified immediately as having a purpose other than furthering domestic education. Although it isn't likely that Beeton or the author of *The Young Lady's Book* were intentionally trying to hide their desire to educate women, the scientific discussions did fall out of notice. This lack of attention not only allowed women access to the information but it also provided them with a way to study the natural world in a way that would not jeopardize their social standing.

## Conclusion

Bella Rokesmith spends a lot of time looking at domestic manuals in the weeks after she becomes a wife. Because Bella was not often asked to perform many household duties as a child/young woman at home, she "was under the constant necessity of referring for advice and support to a sage volume entitled *The Complete British Family Housewife*" (Dickens 1997, 666).<sup>5</sup> Bella was so dedicated to understanding the points being taught to her that "she would sit consulting [it], with her elbows on the table and her temples on her hands, like some perplexed enchantress poring over the *Black Art*" (666). Her absolute dedication to understanding a text that she admits can be a bit convoluted and confusing highlights the fact that her goals are of the utmost importance, at least in her own mind.

Dickens's use of "Black Art" in describing Bella's study pokes fun at the subject she is studying as well as the seriousness with which Bella approaches it. According to the OED, black art can mean either "the art of performing supernatural or magical acts... witchcraft," or "a technique, discipline, practice, etc., which is considered mysterious, sinister, or duplicitous." While the prospect of household management is certainly mysterious to a young housewife, thinking about it in terms of witchcraft brings an entirely new set of implications. The idea of witchcraft brings with it sinister connotations, conjuring up images of a witch standing over a boiling, smoking caldron, combining strange ingredients for even stranger outcomes. But it also illuminates the power struggle that permeated the nineteenth century. Women that were thought to be "witches" were often women in positions of power, something that was thought to be "unnatural" in the nineteenth century. The domestic manual, however, places a woman in a position that is somewhat powerful by making her the center of the household. Although men were still the dominant members within the marriage, women were responsible for taking care of the children, organizing the home, and managing the finances that were a neces-

sary part of running any middle-class home. If a woman is not equipped to properly manage the home, especially the financial aspects, the home could quickly fall apart. This immense amount of power however, like witchery, is an illusion: a woman only has as much power and freedom as her relationship allows.

Bella's dedication to *The Complete British Family Housewife* mimics the effort that many middle class women actually put into their study of the domestic manual of their choice. Women were anxious to discover how to complete the domestic tasks that they were either entirely unfamiliar with or did not have any actual practice completing in their childhoods. In order to meet the overwhelming demand, domestic manuals were churned out in vast numbers.<sup>6</sup> A woman's commitment to becoming the 'perfect housewife' largely centered on the desire to better the lives of her husband and present/future children while crafting and maintaining the perfect image of the family. The introduction of animals to a domestic text brings about a multitude of issues. What purpose do they serve? How do they impact the overall reception of the text? How do they change what the text is doing?

By including animals in the domestic manuals, the authors are essentially recognizing that women have the ability to move beyond the closed domestic space. Even in instances where the author is completely against bringing animals into the home, as Mackarness is, the fact that she felt the desire to even introduce the topic suggests that it is something within the realm of female possibility. It also indicates that she believes there is something dangerous in the action. To bring animals into the home will eventually lead to women venturing outdoors, something that absolutely cannot be tolerated in a young woman. Other manuals, like Beeton's *The Book of Household Management* and *The Young Lady's Book*, speak more favorably about the inclusion of animals. While neither directly encour-

ages women to bring animals into their homes, the deep discussion of scientific detail suggests that women are supposed to have the opportunity to discover the animals they are discussing.

The scientific information being relayed here gives women the opportunity to learn about a topic that was traditionally considered to be "off-limits" within the confines of the domestic manual. The domestic manual serves as a shield by preventing the discussion of animals from being detected and by lessening the sense of danger surrounding the material. By bringing them both together, readers are able to imagine a space in which science and domestic duty can co-exist with neither impeding the study of the other. The domestic manuals, then, give women a way to navigate the strict social standards of the nineteenth century and still have access to intellectual study.

Through the animals, we are able to imagine a different kind of domestic manual. Typically thought of as a text that perpetuates the separate spheres by encouraging women to remain in the home and pursue nothing else, these manuals actually have a different layer to them that is important to recognize. These texts place women in a position of power and provide them with information that is typically not acceptable outside of this context. Intellectual pursuits were often thought to be dangerous to a woman's mind and body, but by including such material in domestic manuals, these authors are essentially arguing otherwise. Women are not only able to understand the information being presented, but they have the right to access it, discuss it, and study it. Understanding this aspect to the domestic manual allows a more dynamic view of the text to come alive. No longer is the manual something that keeps women confined within their homes: it is now something that can push them beyond social boundaries and into a more intellectual way of living.

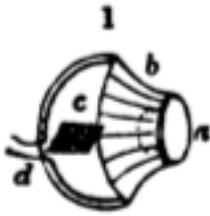


Figure 1: *The Young Lady's Book* (185): "eye of the Owl."



Figure 2: *The Young Lady's Book* (191): beak and legs of rapacious birds

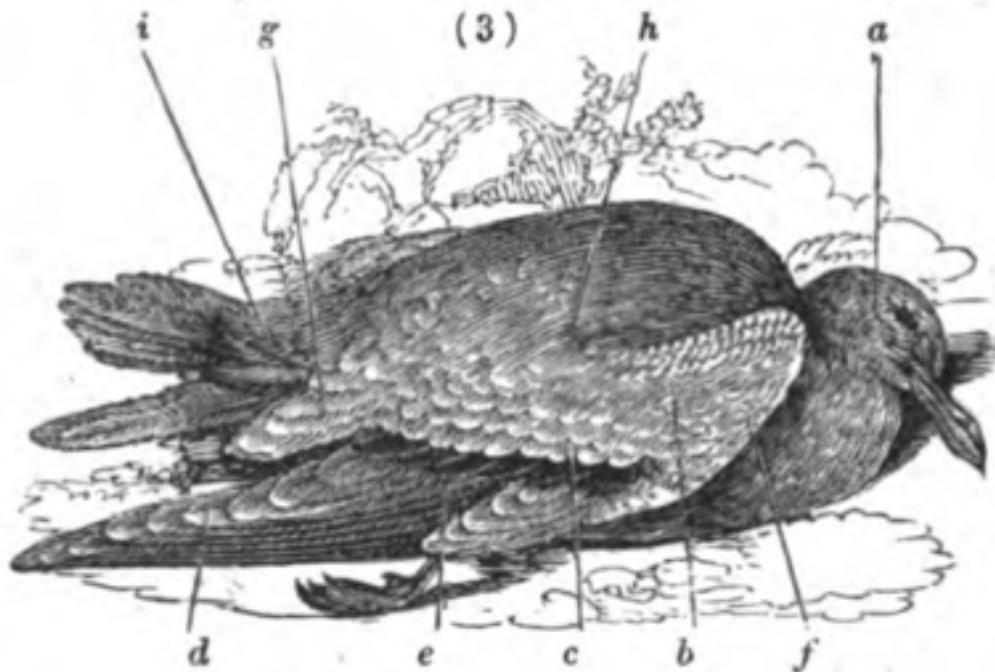


Figure 3: *The Young Lady's Book* (186) "the principal feathers of birds."

## END NOTES

1. It is important to note here that instead of choosing to use 'Harmon,' I have chosen to use his alias 'Rokesmith.' I think that the distinction between the perceived social/economic situation of these men is a crucial one to make, largely because it shapes the idea that Bella has of herself as a wife and of her position in society. The desires that Bella voices in these conversations are not, to her knowledge, in the realm of possibility in her current economic situation, raising them to the level of the ideal.
2. I have chosen to use 'domestic manuals' as opposed to 'household manuals' because I work with a wider variety of pieces than those strictly concerned with educating housewives about how to run the home. Additionally, the wider term 'domestic' helps us think about the domestic sphere as something that doesn't merely encompass the home and how it was run: it also encompasses ideals of behavior and study. These manuals have been studied in contemporary scholarship, but they have not been studied in terms of animals. (See Armstrong 1987).
3. Mrs. Beeton's *The Book of Household Management* was the second best-selling text in its day following only the King James Bible. The overwhelming popularity of the text makes it necessary to talk about in any study of domestic manuals.
4. It is important to note that both proposed methods of pet keeping do not involve physical contact between the ladies and the animals.
5. There is an endnote in the 1997 Penguin edition noting that Dickens' contemporary readers would have identified this book as Mrs. Beeton's *The Book of Household Management*. Beeton's text had been published four years before the publication of *Our Mutual Friend*.
6. It is interesting to note that the mass-production and commercial trade of these domestic manuals mirrors the exotic bird trade in the nineteenth century. Many exotic birds were brought into England by sailors looking to make money after returning from a long journey. Though I will not discuss this point in further detail, it is something to keep in mind when thinking about the economics behind my assertions.

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# EXPOSURE, NEGATIVE, PROOF: HYSTERIA IN THE LENS OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY MEDICAL PHOTOGRAPHY

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This article explores the role of photography in the cultural production of “hysteria” in the nineteenth-century, arguing that image-making technologies deeply shaped public perceptions of deviance and normality. Late nineteenth-century hysteria can be described as a uniquely “photogenic” ailment—literally produced and developed by the light of the camera flash. Art historians have studied the photographic history of hysteria (Didi-Huberman 2003; Koehler 2001; Schade 1995; Gilman 1982). But media scholars have largely ignored the way images of hysteria functioned as a series of visual arguments about the “normal” bourgeois, white, feminine body. Conversely, those whose work has situated hysteria in the larger context of the formation of the modern body have largely ignored the role of photography in the production, diagnosis, and treatment of the malady (Foucault 1979; Stallybrass & White 1986). This paper explores three visual modalities of deviance in the feminine hysterical body: first, the hysteric as “freak,” a corporeal anomaly against which the bourgeois body could be seen as coherent and contained; second, the hysteric as “con-artist,” a living picture of insincerity ultimately deceived by her own deceptions; and third, the hysteric as “degenerate” in the larger discourse of bio-power and eugenics—a dangerous but “curable” threat to her race, class, and gender. In these visual modalities, the camera plays a tripartite role: it is a device that serves an impartial spectator by providing evidence of madness and ill health, a political tool used to separate the fit from the unfit, and a therapeutic instrument used to bring diseased and disorderly bodies back to productivity and health.

A photograph is a time-binding medium, fixing things in flux and making what would otherwise be fleeting endure (Innis 2007). The sudden proliferation of daguerreotypes and photographs in the middle of the nineteenth-century captured for the first time the kinetic movement of life

and forcing things in the world to present themselves in a manner that could be seen, analyzed, and thereby controlled (Heidegger 1938). Photography, introduced into a flourishing culture of scientific empiricism, helped to satisfy and to amplify the desire for vantage points from which one might witness and dutifully record without bias the magnitude and minutia of life (Peters 2005). In early texts, the processes of daguerreotypy and photography were routinely called “discoveries” rather than “inventions,” suggesting that they were natural phenomenon harnessed by human hands (Marien 2002). In Daguerre’s words, “the daguerreotype is not an instrument which serves to draw nature; but a chemical and physical process which gives her the power to reproduce herself” (qtd. in Marien 2002, 23). This new medium, able to serve as an impartial spectator, contributed to a broader “ocularcentric” epistemology in which only that which could be seen and scrutinized could be known and understood (Jay 1993).

Photography democratized image making—all things, great and small could appear within its scope. By the end of the nineteenth-century, even working class people could afford to purchase self-portraits. At the same time, the photograph could be imposed upon the unwilling. From Bertillon’s mug shots, to Galton’s eugenics composites, to Diamond’s psychiatric photographs, to the photo-anthropologists’ images of the ethnographic other, nineteenth-century photography was deeply entwined with the disciplinary technologies by which the human body was organized, institutionalized, and displayed (Smith 1999). For middle class people who sought and bought images of themselves, as well as for the poor, the criminal, and the ill who were captured by the lens without consent, this ability to fix and analyze the otherwise fleeting profoundly changed the cultural relationship between embodiment, image, and identity. The photograph was used both as a “neutral” conduit for the revelation of transparent truths

and as a political tool for organizing white middle-class productive (and reproductive) bodies against the perceived-to-be polluting forces of degeneracy and disorder.

The medicalized body of the hysterical woman was one point of confluence between these two contradictory discourses. The nineteenth-century medical discourse of hysteria organized, amplified, and displayed a host of fundamental social antagonisms. The hysteric was forced to occupy an impossible body that sutured together a series of irresolvable contradictions constellated under a single titular term, “hysteria.” In other words, the hysteric, one of the nineteenth-century’s most remarkable cultural products, was thoroughly *fantastic*: functioning as a kind of a screen upon which to project an array of cultural anxieties and longings (McDaniel 2000). In both popular and clinical descriptions, the hysteric woman was made to embody a host of conflicting and contradictory formulations of class, gender, and sexuality. For example, hysteria was often described as a uniquely bourgeois ailment—the result of leisured idleness, daydreaming, too much schooling, and not enough of the ‘strenuous life.’ Causes, according to one report, included “unnecessarily wearisome and unpractical exercises of the school-room, and... unnatural and unhealthy excitements which the fashionable world and its literary exponent, the trashy novel, can afford” (“Nervous Diseases” 1866). At the same time, hysteria was also often described as a disease of lower class women, whose immoral city living promoted unrestrained sexuality and onanism. Such women, it was said, do not possess “the necessity of self-control because they have to a pitifully small degree any sense of propriety or decency” (Smith-Rosenberg 1972, 670). The hysteric was also seen as a kind of caricature or hypertrophy of femininity such that one could claim that, “hysterics are women more than other women...” and that “all that is customarily attributed to woman’s nervous temperament falls in the domain of hysteria” (Beizer 1994, 19). But hysteria was also considered to be the result of a woman’s participation in too many “masculine” activities, the cure for which was the prohibition of these unwomanly practices: “snuff, coffee, strong tea, and alcoholic drinks.... Hot and crowded rooms, the dissipations of society, and all causes of excitement... should be shunned” (“Hysterics or Hysteria” 1874). Likewise, it was almost unthinkable for a man to be a hysteric: “while most men are hardly aware that they have any nerves—with so little of disturbance are their functions performed. [I]t is very common to say of any man whose nervous system has become deranged that he is as nervous as a woman” (Ibid). Further, hysterics were often thought to have regressed to a condition of child-like helplessness to secure comfort and the attention of men: “Nothing is more gratifying to the hysterical patient than to be the object of attention, and fuss, and sympathy” (Ibid). Yet, the hysteric was also often characterized as an archetypal New Woman, released from her proper gender-roles and irrationally politicized. Anti-feminist writer Eliza Lynn Linton wrote in 1883 that “one of our quarrels with the Advanced Woman of our generation is the hysterical parade they make about their wants and

their intentions.... For every hysterical advocate ‘the cause’ loses a rational adherent and gains a disgusted opponent” (qtd. in Showalter 1993, 307). In sum, the cultural/medical phenomenon of hysteria helped organize and amplify a host of paradoxical fantasy formations about nineteenth-century white womanhood.

Figured as the embodiment of these irreconcilable contradictions, the hysteric produced a *contradictory body*. Medical photographers of hysteria were fascinated by the portrayal of postures and contortions that seemed defied the limitations of the human body (Didi-Huberman 2003). They used their cameras to capture and display these women, twisted in anxiety, rapture, and despair, bearing witness with their bodies to impossible, over-determined identities. To the skeptical twenty-first century observer, the intense postures of rigidity and contortion depicted in the photographs of hysterics taken at the Salpêtrière and other clinics seem like the result of “doctored” images. However, Charcot (Freud’s teacher and one of the most celebrated clinicians of hysteria) claimed that the camera, on the contrary, provided the only irrefutable evidence of the reality of hysteria: “It would seem by some accounts that... I have created this condition by my own willpower. In fact all I am is a photographer. I describe what I see” (1987, 107).

Despite the claims to the contrary by Charcot and his colleagues, the medical photographers of hysteria can be said to have helped to *invent* hysteria (rather than simply discovering and analyzing the ailment (Didi-Huberman 2003). And the camera played an essential role. As Didi-Huberman notes,

photography was in the ideal position to crystallize the link between the fantasy of hysteria and the fantasy of knowledge. A reciprocity of charm was instituted between the physicians, with their insatiable desire for images of Hysteria, and hysterics, who willingly participated and actually raised the stakes through their increasingly theatricalized bodies.... Indeed, hysteria was covertly identified with something like an art, close to the theater or painting (2003, xi).

The psychiatric photography of hysteria is a complex cultural phenomenon, located at the intersection of a variety of contemporaneous discourse practices including physiognomy and phrenology, eugenics and scientific racism, scientific positivism, the photographic documentation of criminality and degeneracy advocated by Lombroso, Bertillon, and Galton, as well as the stranger relations of the modern city to which all of these technologies sought to respond.

Perhaps most centrally, the nineteenth-century “outbreak” of hysteria can be seen, along with these other related cultural formations, as both a product of and a response to the changing relationship between individual bodies and the body politic (Lalvini 1996). The anomalous body of the hysteric emerged at a moment of extraordinary regulation and standardization during the peak of what Foucault called “disciplinary society” (Foucault 1977). A

host of complex technologies sought to train subjects to adopt more predictable and regulated bodily practices. This radical reorganization of the body in modernity required cultural texts through (and against) which it could be productively re-articulated and reintegrated. The hysteric occupies such an alternative body—a visual counterexample against which health and normality could be measured. In this sense, hysteria can be read as sub-genre of the “freak,” the borderland figure that secular scientific positivism would endlessly seek to identify, classify, and control. As Garland-Thomson has noted,

in Victorian America, the exhibition of freaks exploded into a public ritual that bonded a sundering polity together in the collective act of looking... A freak show's cultural work is to make the physical particularity of the freak into a hyper-visible text against which the viewer's indistinguishable body fades into a seemingly neutral, tractable, and invulnerable instrument of the autonomous will, suitable to the uniform abstract citizenry democracy institutes. (1996, 10)

Freakishness—defined as a kind of corporeal incoherence—and hysteria specifically, defies the ready-made (i.e., the panoply of new standardized products from tailored shirts to toilet seats to train cars that flooded nineteenth-century America). The hysteric disrupted the standardization, uniformity, predictability, and bodily docility that this early modern consumption economy required. In some ways more perplexing than those bodies marked by ostensibly “stable” abnormalities (e.g. giants, dwarfs, dog-faced boys, and the like), the hysterical body was irrationally or unpredictably anomalous, moving from visibly “normal” states to the most dramatic displays of physical contortion, catalepsy, lethargy, ecstasy, and then back to docile normality.

In addition to providing a cultural counter-image of docile and corporeally disciplined femininity, the hysteric satisfied another fantasy of order. Clinicians learned to predict and control the seemingly chaotic unfolding of hysterical episodes. Charcot and others developed techniques to provoke and then study the various stages of a hysterical attack, touching women off into madness and then mapping the progression through horror, contortion, rage, ecstasy, climax, and repose. These clinicians organized the erratic movements of the hysteric into a predictable developmental progression and codified their schemas graphically on sketch-charts and in photographic archives. Patients often had access to these documents that codified a “traditional” hysterical attack and thus learned how to produce a proper cycle of postures (Didi-Huberman 2003). Hence, in addition to serving as a representative anomaly against which the “normal” body could be measured, the unruly body of the hysteric itself became normalized and measurable. The containment and disciplining of the hysteric body (through its carefully regulated *production*—a kind of rational production of irrationality) signaled scientific positivism's dialectical triumph over the anomalous corpus. Like one of Galton's grotesque composite photographs, the body of the hysteric became an uncanny com-

posite of culture archetypes and the anxieties with which they were accompanied: piety, eroticism, genteel femininity, childish innocence, and mesmerized somnambulism. Progressing through these shape-shifting forms, from witch to contortionist to saint, the body of the hysteric unfolded a panoply of cultural forms, displayed and then contained by a final positivist iteration in medical knowledge. The visual documentation and classification of the hysterical woman was an organization of anomaly and transgression as such. And after having helped to constitute the “normal” body through stark contrast and transgression, the hysteric could then be seen as an aberration of that ideally docile and predictable body. The hysteric thus occupied two seemingly incompatible positions simultaneously: she represented a kind of alien form, requiring isolation and careful study through experiments that explored its limitations and peculiar capacities; but at the same time, she was also represented not an independent, alternative mode of human experience, but a kind of degeneracy of or deviation from normalcy.

A second contradictory component in the construction of hysteria was the characterization of the hysteric as both *deceiver* and *deceived*. As one writer for *Godey's Lady's Book* explained in 1874,

The patient fancies she cannot walk, and she cannot walk because she fancies she cannot, and is confirmed in her belief by the pleasant sympathy of friends. She really can do things that she does not always admit she can do (“Hysterics or Hysteria,” 284).

Not simply a liar willfully manipulating others, the hysteric was in some ways a living-lie whose fictions were first and foremost self-deception. This alleged deceitfulness of the hysteric was part of what Halttunen has described as a broader nineteenth-century American “crisis of sincerity” (1982). This same age that had rediscovered (or reinvented) hysteria was also an age of self-conscious theatricality in which bourgeois classed and gendered identities were increasingly seen as a dramatic performance of visual eloquence and a “grammar of gesture” (see Halttunen, 1982; Dawson, 1997; Dawson, 2004). Halttunen argues that American culture in the Victorian era can be divided between an early period characterized by a cult of “sentimentality” and “sincerity” and a late period in which the formal qualities of sentimentality became more important than the inner sincerity they were taken to represent. The dislocations initiated by the discourses and practices of modernization produced a kind of anonymity in which physical appearances (rather than “blood”) became markers of status and marginality (Halttunen 1982; Smith 1999). When staring at strangers on a train or shaking hands with potential con-artists in the street, the nineteenth-century city-dweller had begun to “live amid surfaces,” and was, as per Emerson's advice, learning “to skate well on them” (1844). The successful navigation of these superficial social-ites required a visual vocabulary of criminality, immorality, and deception, and a corresponding suspension of belief in the words of others despite the seeming sincerity with

which they were uttered. Doctors and loved ones were thus advised to discount the claims of hysterical women and to instead trust their eyes and instruments. For example, consider the following example from the *New York Times* (1883), included in a list of other similar “false accusations” by diagnosed hysterics:

A house-maid was found lying behind a door, bound, gagged, and covered with bruises. She stated that she had been brutally attacked by two burglars with blackened faces, but she was a highly hysterical woman, and there appears to have been strong evidence that she had contrived to tie her own hands, and gag and bruise herself (“Female Hallucinations,” 5).

The diagnosis of hysteria thus mobilized a host of epistemological assumptions, specifically validating visual evidence produced by men over the verbal testimony of the women in their care.

Amidst the nineteenth-century crisis of sincerity and authenticity, the hysteric stood as a dangerous and cunning hypocrite, a con-artist that dupes husbands and children, doctors and priests, shirking her domestic duties, collapsing her family and its division of labor, mocking science and the goodwill of others. Hysteria thus emerges as a performance of a grandiose insincerity. And, given what was perceived as a propensity to self- and other- deception, medical doctors often found it best to simply ignore hysterics’ testimony altogether. The following excerpt from one of Charcot’s “Tuesday Lessons” on hysteria illustrates this method and attitude vividly.

Charcot: Let us press again on the hysteriogenic point. Here we go again. Occasionally subjects even bite their tongues...

Patient: Mother, I am frightened.

Charcot: Note the emotional outburst. If we let things go unabated, we will soon return to the epileptoid behavior...

Patient: Oh! Mother!

Charcot: Again, note these screams. You could say it is a lot of noise over nothing. (1987, 104-105).

The belief that all of the physical and psychological pain accompanying hysteria might be “much ado about nothing,” that the hysteric was a kind of grand deceiver, ultimately duped by her own lies, made her testimony invalid; the impartial lens of the eye and the camera would have to replace the sympathetic ear, if the hysteric was to be safely returned to her senses and to her home.

This article began by considering hysteria as a fantasy formation that sutured irreconcilable contradictions about the human body and its identities, constellated cultural anxieties, and provided a counter-ideal against which “proper” femininity was constituted. I then identified a second turn in discourse about hysteria, which described the hysteric as a con-artist, deceiving and self-deceived. Next, I turn to a third contradictory discursive formation: the view of the hysteric as both a threat to productivity and a potential savior for the white racial majority perceived to be under attack by ethnic others.

Although images of the ailment frequently portrayed the hysteric as an alien other, the hysteric was also thought to be reformable, capable of being brought back to “normal” bourgeois race, class, gender, and sexual practices. This was seen to be especially important because the hysteric was not only an unruly other, but she was also a potential mother. Hysteria has been associated with pregnancy and women’s reproductive capacities since its first diagnoses in ancient Egypt and Greece (Veith 1965). But as Foucault and others have detailed, human sexuality and reproduction in particular gains a new political importance in modernity as it is reconfigured in relation to race science, sociology and populations studies, constructions of madness and degeneracy, and the demands of capital. In Foucauldian terms, nineteenth-century discourse about hysteria evokes two intersecting conceptions of power. The first, which Foucault (1977) calls “disciplinary power,” is concerned with specific individual bodies, subjecting them to compulsory visibility, testing and analysis, and a wide range of techniques designed to produce predictable, docile subjects. The second, which Foucault (1979) calls “biopower,” is addressed not to individual bodies but to populations and is concerned with fertility and mortality rates, hygiene, and other techniques designed to regulate the health of populations. These two technologies of power, “an anatomo-politics of the human body and a biopolitics of the human race,” do not constitute a mutually exclusive binary opposition, but rather interpenetrate and support each other in a variety of discourses and technologies (Foucault 2003). This is especially evident in the nineteenth-century study and treatment of hysteria, which sought to analyze, predict and control the bodies of individual women in an effort to produce a more biologically productive citizenry and to eliminate forms of “degeneracy” that would corrupt the body politic.

The concern to maximize biopower provided the underlying rationale for a wide range of racist social policies—by which Foucault means not only ethnic racism but also the attempted elimination of madness, physical deformity, sexual perversion, and any other factors that might contribute to the biological degeneracy of the state (Foucault 2003). Foucault traces this racial discourse and its implications for contemporary technologies of power:

It is no longer a battle in the sense that a warrior would understand the term, but a struggle in the biological sense: the differentiation of species, natural selection, and the survival of the fittest species. Similarly, the theme of the binary society which is divided into two races or two group with different languages, laws, and so on will be replaced by that of a society that is, in contrast, biologically monist. Its only problem is this: it is threatened by a certain number of heterogeneous elements which are not essential to it... The state is, and must be, the protector of the integrity, the superiority, and the purity of the race (2003, 81).

The nineteenth-century medical discourse of hysteria occupies a uniquely ambiguous position in this battle, participating both in an initial duality (hysteric as freak

defined against the normal body) and then reintegrated into a “biologically monist” social totality. The hysteric is doubly ambiguous insofar as she is both “degenerate” (e.g. prone to onanism, sexual frigidity, lesbianism, “unwomanly” dress and behavior, etc) but also treatable and capable of once again taking up her heteronormative duties (“Girls Who Fall in Love With Each Other” 1897). The treatment of white, physiognomically “correct” hysterical women and their return to productive motherhood was thus seen the moral duty of the physicians in whose care she was placed.

Clinicians used photography and other image-making technologies to aid in the treatment of hysteric women and to help them to reenter the life of “normal,” productive white femininity. For example, in 1858, John Conolly collaborated with photographer Hugh W. Diamond to produce a celebrated study and analysis of photographs of the insane (Gilman 1976). Conolly argued that physicians could learn how to diagnose and treat mental illness by studying the physiognomic indications of “morbid movements of the mind” (qtd. in Berkenkotter 2008). One set of images in his collection portrays a case of “puerperal insanity,” a kind of postpartum hysterical condition toggling between the poles of mania and melancholia. Two line drawings (recreated at the time from photographs that have since been lost) show a progression from a suicidal manic-depressive cycle to a successful convalescence with her “faded grace marvelously restored” (Gilman 1976, 65).

Other images depict even more explicitly the progression from madness to normality and its implications for the medical regulation of bio-power. Conolly describes a case in which

A young married woman has lately become a mother; and for some days all goes well... But this pleasant domestic state is all at once interrupted by the altered tone, or manner, or temper of the young mother; who speaks sharply to those about her, or loses her cheerfulness, becomes indifferent to her child and seems... to be detached from her husband, and from all about her, and from everything real. (Gilman 1976, 59)

In one image, the young mother is depicted in a state of “bewilderment” in the first days after the delivery of her child. The next image, taken eight days after the first, depicts the woman under the control of “an excess of animal spirits.” Conolly emphasizes the woman’s inability to control her own body; she has torn her clothes and hair and has begun to eat “not only willingly but voraciously.” The third image portrays her upright and “neatly dressed,” presumably on the way to recovery. However, Conolly notes the “tension of the facial muscles,” which he suggests bears witness to the possibility of a relapse (qtd. in Gilman 1976, 60). She soon returned, reports Conolly, to the “drollery and destructiveness portrayed in the second portrait” (Ibid.) Her relapse was only temporary, however, and she soon became once again “industrious, and quite tranquil” (Ibid.) In a fourth picture, taken after two more months of observation and treatment in the asylum, her transformation is complete. The woman has regained a kind of genteel posture “with composed features and

pleasant honest face” (Ibid.) She has taken up the material indicators of health and wellbeing—the photograph shows her wearing a tidy bonnet and embroidered shawl with her hands neatly fold in a posture of self-control. Most importantly, Conolly reports that upon her release from the asylum the woman agreed to return to her husband and child and take up her role as wife and mother.

This progression of images provides a concise visual summary of the varied and contradictory conceptions of hysteria. The first and second images portray the hysteric as a dangerous and alien other, unfit for her civic and familial duties—in fact barely human, controlled by “animal spirits.” The third image shows a deceptive manipulator, able to fake the posture of bourgeois bodily control (or alternatively, a ‘normal’ bourgeois body merely faking illness). The sharp eye of the physiognomist, aided by the tool of the camera, is required to point out the subtle signs of abnormality and direct the therapeutic intervention toward her recovery. The final image shows the hysterical woman reintegrated into the fold of normalcy; no longer a threat to the health of her family and society, she is once again docile, obedient, productive, and most importantly, reproductive.

## Conclusion

This paper has sought to read the camera as a “political instrument,” a technology fueled by power and pleasure, utilized in service of the production of the modern disciplined and productive body. It has begun an exploration of three visual modalities of nineteenth-century hysteria: the hysteric as anomalous other, as theatrical deceiver, and as a potential threat to (white) social wellbeing who must be returned to (re)productivity. I have argued that the study and treatment of hysteria enacted a drama of disorder, duplicity, violence, and finally redemption perfectly suited to amplify and assuage the anxieties of a bourgeois public struggling to reconcile the contradictions of nineteenth-century society. Like the “freak,” the hysteric provided a kind of negative image against which the normalized and disciplined bourgeois body could be safely defined. Like the “con-man,” the hysteric offered good reason to discount verbal testimony and trust instead only what could be seen, fixed, and repeated. However, largely unlike these other margin-dwellers, the hysteric could and indeed must be redeemed through detached, impartial analysis and clinical trial. The hysteric thus emerges in this light as one early and important example of the kind of social scientific inquiry that first creates that which it would seek to control and then cure. Reading the imagistic vocabulary of hysteria this way offers a representative model for the study of the developmental progression by which otherness is first produced, then disabled, and finally reintegrated into a “harmonious” sutured totality. Scholars might extend the current work to explore role of other technologies of visuality, from early cinematography to endoscopy and brain imagery, in the production, diagnosis, and treatment of culturally constructed iterations of mental illness.

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# FORGOTTEN CHILD: *BASTARD OUT OF CAROLINA* AND THE HISTORY OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

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When it was published in 1992, Dorothy Allison's *Bastard out of Carolina* was met with wide acclaim for its mercilessly realistic portrayal of an impoverished family's life, and the effects of physical and sexual abuse on a child's development. *The Gay and Lesbian Times* described the book as "a brilliant, soul-wrenching novel that sings with the unbridled fervor of a gospel choir" (Hannan 1992), while Allison's writing was called "close to flawless" by *The New York Times Book Review* (Graeber 1993). Allison drew from her own life experiences to give the book its excellent realism, admitting that many of the characters in the book were based upon members of her own family (Allison 2011). The references to Allison's childhood and its effects on her prose have been attributed to the story's success multiple times, but what does not get as much attention is Allison's choice to set the story specifically in the mid-1950s. In an interview with KPBS News, Allison explained that *Bastard* was only influenced by her memories, and was not a retelling of them. Allison calls this line between memoir and storytelling a "deliberate choice" (Allison 2011). This means that the setting of *Bastard* was not a coincidence, but an informed decision on Allison's part. It places *Bastard* in one of the transitional periods of American history, dramatically affecting the tale more than any other timeline. The fifties saw the dying remains of an America without proper social or legal protection for its abused children. Until then, the knowledge of molestation and incest was willfully kept in the back of the public's consciousness, and what little regulation existed was riddled with misconceptions and ignorance. Even if the protagonist were not shackled by her shame, confusion, and lowly origins, she would be hard pressed to find the judicial help she needed in the aftermath of her stepfather's abuse and eventual rape. *Bastard* can be read as an example of how the lack of resources during the fifties negatively impacted children, especially the impoverished and working class. This essay will explore the psyches of the two main characters, Ruth Anne "Bone" Boatwright and Glen Waddell, and the social community that fos-

tered them in order to show how they fit into a broader historical narrative.

*Bastard* is set in Allison's hometown of Greenville, South Carolina, and follows the childhood of Ruth Anne Boatwright, nicknamed "Bone" by her family. Bone narrates the story, which opens with the tale of her birth. Due to a drunk driving accident, her mother, Anney Boatwright, is left comatose during Bone's birth. Bone is consequently labeled a bastard by the state when Anney and her sisters cannot fool the doctors into thinking the fifteen-year-old Anney is married. This introduces the reader to the backwater county the Boatwrights live in, where their hard reputations and "white trash" status remains a stinging wound for Anney, and later Bone, throughout the story. After the death of her first husband and the father of Bone's sister, Reese, Anney is left broken and desperate for love. This leaves her open to the advances of Glen Waddell, the youngest son of an upper class family, who marries Anney to "shame his daddy and shock his brothers" (Allison 1993, 13). At first Glen appears to be bursting with love for both Anney and her daughters, but soon after the wedding he begins to molest Bone. When Anney miscarries his son and becomes infertile as a result, Glen's treatment and hatred of Bone escalates into a final, violent rape on her aunt's kitchen floor. In what seems to be an unthinkable act, Anney leaves with Glen at the end of the book, and Bone is left with an uncertain future. Interspersed through all of this is the tale of Bone's coming of age, her interactions with the world around her, and the devastating impact this hardship and abuse leaves.

Society is now acutely aware of how widespread child abuse is, how difficult it is to uncover, and the negative impact it can have on the victim's psychological growth. National databases and websites exist to alert families if any sexual predators are living within a designated radius of them. There are sectors of psychiatry, law enforcement, and social care to help child victims. Teachers and other childcare providers are instructed on the signs of an abused child, and how to properly approach the situation. Due

to all of these precautions, it is often easy to forget just how recent this newfound vigilance is. Public accounts of surviving childhood molestation were virtually unheard of sixty years ago, when Bone would have been alive. The *idea* of such abuse was not foreign; Joseph Davis points out that in the 1920s, for example, victims would admit to their experiences via anonymous surveys (2005, 27). Standing up and speaking out was something that almost never happened, and the brave souls who did certainly were not well known. In fact, one of the first publicized cases of a survivor sharing her story did not happen until 1971, when Florence Rush related her experience to the assembly of the first conference on rape hosted by the New York Radical Feminists (Davis 2005, 26).

Despite the fact that the fifties and the decades preceding it did see a rising wave of concern regarding sexual deviance, what shackled people like Bone was the lack of a safe space for them to properly grieve, rage, and come to terms with their abuse among people who saw them as more than just a statistical figure. Bone faces this kind of well-intentioned ignorance near the end of the book when Sherriff Cole comes in to ask her for her statement. As kind as he comes off, Cole clearly sees Bone as just “The Victim” in his investigation. He makes the token attempts to make Bone feel comfortable, calling her by her nickname and promising her justice (Allison 1993, 295-98). As Bone and later her Aunt Raylene make clear, the technical help of a doctor or police officer is not the most important aid that an abuse victim requires, especially one so young. The essential need for control and healing in a safe space was not fully advocated for until as late as the 1980s, when the unspoken order for silence was finally broken.

Before highlighting the differences between the social support system of Bone’s time and the present day, it is important to describe the long-term psychological pain that a man like Glen can inflict upon a child. Doing so elucidates how many victims were silenced before the law could even get involved, and explains Bone’s actions throughout the novel. As many other reviews and studies have gone into the effects of such trauma upon a child, this essay primarily addresses the factors that Bone herself displays, such as her masturbation fantasies, self-blame, and the beginning signs of Rape Trauma Syndrome, which she manifests near the end of the book.

This dark journey begins when Glen first molests Bone in his car while they are waiting for Anney to give birth to Glen’s child. Before Glen even knows that his newborn son is dead, he pulls Bone into the front seat onto his lap while her little sister is still asleep. His hand slithers between her legs while he holds Bone trapped between his chest and arm. He begins to rut against her, perverting the moment with traditional words of comfort, love, and promises he befools just by molesting her. Frozen with terror, Bone describes the experience:

His hand dug in further. He was holding himself in his fingers. I knew what was under his hand. I’d seen my cousins naked, laughing, shaking their

things and joking, but this was a mystery, scary and hard. His sweat running down his arms to my skin smelled strong and nasty. He grunted, squeezed my thighs between his arm and his legs. His chin pressed down on my head and his hips pushed up at the same time. He was hurting me, hurting me! (Allison 1993, 47)

Glen does not know at this point that his son is stillborn. This act is not motivated by misplaced grief, though no reason would ever excuse these actions. After this passage Glen is shown wiping something bitter on his blanket; he has clearly orgasmed, using Bone as a breathing sex toy. It is an assault, but is it rape? Bone is unsure if what Glen did even constitutes as sex, and she is not alone. One of the hardest obstacles while prosecuting a sexual crime is the lack of a consensus on *what*, exactly, defines sexual abuse.

According to doctors Hilarski, Feit, and Wodarski, that definition varies from among states, the cities within that state, and even between counties (2009, 29). The legal definition of sexual abuse cited most often is from the Child Abuse Protection and Treatment Act (CAPTA):

The employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of such conduct; or the rape, and in the cases of caretaker or other inter-familial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children or incest with children. (“Sexual Abuse” 2002, 199)

Even that definition is vague at best, and it did not come into being until 1996. Forty-one years in the past, Bone is left wondering if Glen’s assault even happened to her. She talks about feeling the bruises Glen left behind, and “wondering how [she] could have bruised [herself] if it had been a dream” (Allison 1993, 48). Ignorance about sex, and therefore sexual assault, has been a great influence on American society since its Puritan foundations. British psychologist Dennis Howitt explains that physicians in 1909 claimed the transfer of STIs from parent to child through sexual intercourse was rare (1993, 13). Leroy Ashby describes how psychiatrists in 1937 believed that sexual assault held no traumatic consequences for children (1997, 118). Even as late as the 1940s, a cure for venereal disease was thought to be found in sexual intimacy with infants (Hilarski, Wodarski, and Feit 2008, 20). Sexual roles were based upon a medieval structure that harmed those who were considered too weak to fight back, namely women and children. In fact, multiple instances of child sexual abuse (CSA) have been attributed to a wife’s inability to satisfy her husband. This reiterates one of the greatest double standards regarding sex and gender: men’s sexual pleasure is regarded as an entitlement. The media reinforces this idea with “getting the girl” as the ultimate prize, or a husband’s reward for working all day. Sex remains the best indicator of masculinity, and pleasuring the body is directly correlated with self-worth. Women, on the other

hand, are constantly told contradictions, if not complete lies, about their sexual role in society. A woman is not supposed to enjoy sex, but may be shamed for her lack of passion and called frigid. She is supposed to stay virginal for as long as possible, yet automatically know enough to pleasure her lover sufficiently. When a man is able to give a woman an orgasm, it is considered a skill. When a woman brings a man to orgasm, she is doing her duty. Women are objectified, sexualized, and infantilized in every facet of culture. To have autonomy over her sexuality is dangerous to the patriarchy, which is why so many rape victims struggle to prove their credibility. Rape and other forms of sexualized violence remains one of the few crimes for which the victim must prove their innocence in order for a *chance* to prove the guilt of the offender.

Embroided in this hypocrisy is Bone, whose sexual agency was obliterated in that car, just as her body was crushed by Glen's painful embrace. Glen's abuse escalates after that, turning physical as well as sexual. Glen beats Bone until he breaks her bones, and then lies about his reasons to Anne. He isolates Anne and her children from the rest of the Boatwright clan, and lashes out against Bone when he is angry about his inability to hold down a job. The little girl, barely ten-years-old, tries her best to stay out of Glen's way, but soon realizes that nothing she does will keep his hands off her. Around this time, Bone begins to masturbate to fantasies full of fire, voyeurism, and rage. Each new fantasy is in direct response to what Glen is doing. After his initial assault in the car, a helpless Bone begins to touch herself, and "the daydream was about struggling to get free while the fire burned hotter and hotter" (Allison 1993, 63). When he begins to physically beat her, she imagines people being forced to watch it happen, and gives herself much needed control over her reactions in these fantasies: "Sometimes a whole group of them would be trapped into watching. They couldn't help or get away. They had to watch. In my imagination I was proud and defiant" (112). Bone eventually begins to watch Reese when she starts masturbating as well. It is implied at one point that Glen has later focused some of his incestuous longings onto Reese:

Rolling around on the wet leaves she kept shouting "No! No!" The haughty expression on her face was replaced by mock terror as she threw her head back and forth wildly like the heroine in an adventure movie.... Below me, Reese pushed her hips into the leaves and made grunting noises. Someone, someone, she imagined, was doing terrible exciting things to her. (117)

By itself masturbation is a perfectly acceptable activity, even for children as young as Reese and Bone. Children have sexuality just as all humans do. The problem for Bone is that many prominent attorneys and psychiatrists during her time would classify her very sexuality as the *cause* of Glen's abuse, and use it as an excuse to dismiss any charges she brought up against him.

As late as the 1960s, victims of child abuse were considered primarily dishonest. The *Columbian Law Review* states:

false accusations of sex crimes in general, and rape in particular, are general believed to be much more frequent than untrue charges of other crimes. A woman may accuse an innocent man of raping her because she is mentally sick or given to delusions.... Since stories of rape are frequently lies or fantasies.... such a story, in itself, show not be enough to convict a man of the crime. ("Corroborating Charges of Rape" 1967, 1138)

America suffered a strange sort of cognitive dissonance from the twenties to the sixties where they willfully pretended CSA, incest, and other forms of sexual abuse were rare, yet still claimed full understanding of such abuse. Unfortunately, this understanding was focused primarily on erasing or blaming the child victim, and using children's own developing sexuality as a weapon to discredit them. Carla Van Dam argues that Sigmund Freud played a large role in fostering this misconception with his description of the Oedipus/Electra complexes, which theorizes that children sexually fantasize about their parents. Freud believed that any claims of sexual abuse were the product of a child's overactive imagination, a theory that was almost universally accepted by the psychiatric and medical communities. Interestingly enough, Freud's original hypothesis stated the opposite: that abuse in childhood *caused* anxiety, disordered thinking, and problems with intimacy later on in life. He changed his views after intense pressure from his peers (Van Dam 2001, 89, 122).

Living under these misconceptions means Bone has little to no psychological or social outlet to help with the crippling effects of her abuse, including low self-esteem, depression and aggression, trouble with relationships, and PTSD. She shows signs of all of these effects throughout the book, but the most difficult to read is in the aftermath of Glen's physical rape of her at her aunt's house, after which Bone displays clear signs of Rape Trauma Syndrome. B.J. Cling talks about the condition in detail, writing that Rape Trauma Syndrome was first documented in 1974 by Lynda Holmstrom and Ann Wolbert Burgess (2004, 19). Since then it has been adopted into the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* as a form of Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and is supported by the majority of the medical community.

RTS is divided into three stages: acute, outer adjustment, and renormalization. Bone exhibits the beginning signs of the first phase immediately after being admitted to the hospital. The acute stage is the period right after rape occurs, when the victim is struggling to initially cope with the attack. As every case of sexual assault is highly individualized, no one responds exactly alike during this key time period. What does appear, however, is a pattern of behavior that allows doctors to discern the presence of RTS. These behaviors include, but are not limited to: anxiety, numbness, hypersensitivity to the presence (and especially touch) of another person, poor memory (most likely from shock or a desire to forget the assault ever happened), and repression. Bone shuts down after Glen's rape, showing signs of depression after Raylene brings her home. Allison displays Bone's mindset with an unflinching simplicity, revealed in this passage:

I could not stand to remember that, could not watch it again. I turned away, closed my eyes, and prayed for the darkness to come back. I refused to eat, refused to speak, covered my face, and would not let Aunt Raylene coax me out of bed. She left me alone, and I woke up with my eyes wet and my mouth open, but with no memory of dreaming.... I was just a whisper in the dark saying no and hoping to die. (Allison 1993, 303)

Bone withdraws from the family members who come to comfort her, refuses to leave her bed until Raylene physically moves her to the front porch, and suffers flashbacks of her ordeal whenever she closes her eyes. Children who have been sexually abused before the onset of puberty, as Bone was, are far more likely to face a number of problems in their teenage and adult lives: clinical depression or another form of mental illness, a higher chance of STDs or pregnancy from promiscuous sexual activity, substance abuse, or suicidal ideation (Hilarski, Wodarsku, and Feit 2008, 78-79). Due to her family's lack of monetary funds, the reputation her white trash roots give her, and the lack of understanding about RTS at the time, Bone is in a position where it is highly likely that she may die without receiving clinical support. As Bone herself reflects as she stares at her sunken face in the mirror, "I was who I was going to be, and she was a terrible person" (Allison 1993, 301).

What should be noted is the difficulty prosecutors run into when trying to use RTS in court, even in 2014. Only twenty states allow Rape Trauma Syndrome to be used as evidence in the courtroom despite the majority of support it receives from medical professionals (Cling 2004, 24). The three major arguments against admitting RTS into the court room are: the possibility of a trigger other than rape causing the symptoms, the question of scientific reliability, and the suggestion that because RTS is primarily used in the medical world, it is ineffective in a judicial hearing. Opponents of this legal tactic claim it is a form of "abuse excuse," and do their best to eliminate RTS as evidence due to its effectiveness in improving the victim's credibility with a jury (Cling 2004, 18). This task of improving the victim's credibility is hard enough to accomplish due to the many prejudices rape victims face in America, including, for example, the prevalent rationale that a woman "asks for it" in the form of her clothing, past experiences, sobriety, or behavior. Often the proof that RTS or a similar form of trauma exists in a victim becomes one of the most persuasive arguments in the prosecution's favor.

Now, what is described above is the mindset of *today*. Imagine if Bone had tried to seek legal help in prosecuting Glen's violent treatment of her over five decades ago. Bone is known for coming from a criminal, poor, classless family. She has a history of theft, lying in the various schools she attends, telling graphic and disturbing stories. On top of that she is not conventionally pretty enough to garner sympathy. All of this, along with the lack of understanding about RTS and similar manifestations of psychological damage, almost guarantees that Bone would find little help in the justice system, no matter what Sheriff Cole promises her.

Every aspect of Bone's environment is included to emphasize how difficult her life will be as she matures under the weight of Glen's actions. In an interview with *Publisher's Weekly*, Allison states, "All the women in my family grew up not valuing themselves, not loving themselves and giving themselves away to the first person who smiled at them" (Salter 1998). This describes Anney Boatwright almost painfully well, and Bone wonders at the end of the novel if she will turn out the same way. Allison takes the misogynistic fifties, the conservative South, and the inherent self-hatred present in all developing teens, and twists it together to create a complex trap for Bone, one that leaves Glen free to hit the road with her mother. Would it make that much of a difference, then, if Allison *did* set *Bastard* in the present day? Would Bone's future look more optimistic if she lived even ten years later? To answer that, it is important to understand some of the driving forces that brought about legal and medical reform when it comes to helping child abuse victims. Women like Rush and Ellen Weber, who in 1977 published the groundbreaking article "Incest: Sexual Abuse Begins at Home," are credited for helping to finally break the collective silence surrounding abuse victims' stories (Davis 2005, 55). What brought the term *child sexual abuse* into national conversation were the social movements of the sixties and seventies, such as a revival of feminism. Feminism as a whole played an instrumental role in advancing the progress of victims of all forms of abuse, and exposing the damaging effects of a patriarchal society.

This is the society that produced Glen Waddell, the childish, miserable shell of a man who serves as the novel's antagonist. Glen's low self-esteem, sexual deviancy, cowardice, and lack of empathy are all shaped by the culture he lives in, and Bone must pay the price for it. Many child abusers have been mistreated in some form or another in their own youth, or have a strained relationship with one or both of their parents. Glen constantly fights for his father's love and approval, something he sees as easily handed to his brothers for less. This sort of parental rejection makes it difficult for criminals like Glen to form healthy emotional attachments as adults. As Bone's Aunt Ruth explains to the little girl, "There's a way he's just a little boy himself, wanting more of your mama than you, wanting to be her baby more than her husband. And that ain't so rare, I'll tell you" (Allison 1993, 123). Glen wants a son so that he can act out the paternal bond he never had with his own father. This means that despite his words, Glen does not and cannot see Bone and Reese as his own children, deserving of the same nurturing and encouragement that he seeks from others even as they continually spurn his affections, including the Boatwrights, Anney, and his own family. Glen has little concept of what love even means. He just knows *need*, and because of the sense of male entitlement he is indoctrinated with since his birth, he believes he has more of a right to Anney's attention than Anney's own daughter. He therefore sees no harm in punishing the smaller, weaker, *inferior* girls merely for existing. There was no trigger for this; nothing Bone did sent Glen across the line into abuse. That particular beast

was always there inside him, brought about by a lack of familial structure and years of society telling him that he has certain rights by virtue of possessing a penis. He loves women based on what they can give him, and punishes them when they fail to comply with his worldview. This is shown most clearly on the fateful night in the hospital parking lot when Glen mentions that Anney is, rightfully, scared about Glen's reaction if she gives birth to a girl. Up until then Glen has refused to even entertain the notion that she will not birth him a son. Now, the first time he voices the possibility, he only says, "and if it's a girl, we can make another soon enough. I'll have my son" (Allison 1993, 46). A prospective daughter provides him with nothing he cannot take from Bone, as proven by his actions mere moments later, and therefore deserves none of his consideration, let alone his love. Glen is the product of a society that views women as vases to be filled with whatever a man desires. When it comes to incest, the law of Glen's time does not see men and women as equal. In 1956, the Sexual Offences Act lays out this disparity:

It is an offence for a man to have sexual intercourse with a woman whom he knows to be his grand-daughter, daughter, sister or mother... It is an offence for a woman of the age of sixteen or over to permit a man whom she knows to be her grandfather, father, brother or son to have sexual intercourse with her by her consent. (Qtd. in Howitt 1993, 98)

No matter what Glen does, in the eyes of society Bone is at least partially at fault for being too scared, confused, or weak to fight back.

What harms Bone the most is that her entire community, even the women in her life, enables this system of helplessness and excuse Glen's behavior. Anney is constantly forgiving Glen and returning to him, reinforcing the idea that Glen can get away with this behavior if he acts contrite. She tells her sisters that Glen's anger is caused by his inability to hold down a job, without adding a word about how that exact temper is the *cause* of their financial instability, and she pities him for the lack of trust given to him by his family. She pleads with Bone to stay out of Glen's way and not anger him, which leads to further cementation of the idea that something is fundamentally wrong with Bone that is tearing the family apart. Anney is not the only woman to enable the patriarchy in *Bastard*, however. After Bone's uncles discover the wounds on her backside and proceed to beat Glen enough to warrant hospitalization, one of Bone's aunts amazingly *chastises* the men for taking such action. She tells them that "You should always give a man a chance" (Allison 1993, 254). This perfectly sums up the double standard Bone and so many other women must live with: men deserve second, third, and fourth chances. Women only ever get one. In a society with rigid gender roles, Bone is as much trapped by her sex as she is by her upbringing.

The observant girl that she is, Bone makes note of this unfairness multiple times throughout the book. She wishes she had been born a boy so she could fight back

against Glen, run off and travel, doing something more with herself than staying home and birthing children. Instead she is sexually objectified and the actions of her molesters are excused. When she travels with Shannon Pearl, an albino girl Bone befriends whose family travels with the gospel circuit, Bone describes such an encounter with drunk, older men backstage:

Certainly sin didn't touch them the way it did Shannon and me. Both of us had learned to walk carefully backstage, with all those hands reaching out to stroke out thighs and pinch the nipples we barely had.

'Playful boys,' Mrs. Pearl would laugh, stitching the sleeves back on their jackets, mending the rips in their pants. I was amazed that she couldn't smell the whiskey breath set deep in her fine embroidery, but I wasn't about to commit the sin of telling her what God surely didn't intend her to know. (163)

Everyone in Bone's environment enables her abuse, even if it is by staying willfully blind.

This parallels America during the twenties to sixties, when the public was happy to pretend CSA was not as big a problem as it was. In fact, CAPTA, the standard definition every state must meet to qualify for federal grants for child welfare programs, did not add child abuse to its list of offenses until 1988 (Hilarski, Wodarski, and Feit 2008, 20). As progressivism faded into history and Americans focused on bigger concerns, such as World War II and the Great Depression, child abuse was not considered a major social problem. In-depth research of CSA became the responsibility of individual psychologists. It was not until the sixties, a decade too late to help Bone and real children like her, that child welfare officials revisited the matter with any seriousness. Even then, rising institutions that focused on CSA were treated as businesses, and little attention was given to the social factors affecting abuse, such as the difference between poverty stricken families like Bone's and well off families like Glen's (Hilarski, Wodarski, and Feit 2008, 3). In 1946, only one in five counties in the United States had full-time child welfare specialists, and the majority of these places were *not* in backwoods neighborhoods such as the one Allison wrote (Ashby 1997, 117). Police and doctors had zero training regarding how to recognize and deal with potential victims. This is shown through Bone's counterproductive encounters with both professions, from Sherriff Cole's patronizing and insistent questioning to a doctor's aggressive interrogation of the nature of her injuries when Bone visits him with a broken tailbone. Nothing in Bone's environment is properly equipped to help her, and many outlets refuse to see that she even *needs* help.

If, however, Bone did end up facing Glen down in court, would it make a difference? To answer that, the legal system of her time period must be examined. Since Bone's tale ends with her abandoned on Aunt Raylene's porch—her innocence shattered and Glen likely dead before he is brought to justice—I will not spend too much

time on this hypothetical question. However, it is prudent to have an idea of how the law would view Bone's case when she was ten, fifteen, or twenty in order to fully appreciate just how desperate her position was then as opposed to the modern day. The first laws of the United States were based on English Common Law, which came over with the pilgrims. On the subject of rape, five conditions must be met: the act must be illicit in nature, it must be penetrative intercourse involving both penis and vagina, the victim must be a woman, excessive force must have been used, and there must be ample evidence that such force was used against the female victim's will (Reddington and Kresisel 2005, 236). The problems with this definition are obvious. It completely ignores the following: male victims, the type of grooming, fear, conditions (such as an unconscious, drunk or drugged victim) that leave the victim unable to struggle, and any sexual act not penetrative missionary. This is unsurprising coming from the "backward" colonists, but notably these guidelines were used up until the 1970s (Ibid.). So in the eyes of the law, only Glen's rape of Bone at the end of the book would count as a "real" rape, and not any of the touching, masturbation, and fingering that occurred beforehand. The shame that kept Bone silent would work against her. The prosecution would have to try to explain to the jury why Bone kept silent for years about Glen's abuse, and create a narrative that would gain her sympathy, despite her family's shady reputation and the rage that settles in every line of Bone's face by the end of the book. Bone would have to face down Glen, and almost certainly her mother, which she found hard enough to do in her own home. There have been efforts to make courtrooms more child friendly for cases such as these, but they are rarely enacted (Staller and Coulborn 2010, 4). Bone's integrity would be questioned, and she would have to repeat an acceptably detailed account of her story multiple times, both in private and public. She would be forced to deal with the stress of court delays, cross examinations, and the possibility that Glen could receive a light sentence, if any at all, because the judge and jury might find Bone's gender, age, or socioeconomic status to be wanting. These problems continue into the modern day, of course, but they are vastly improved in comparison to what victims like Bone faced. The American public was just too willing to ignore that the ideal family could become so twisted. It was easier to pretend that rape was an uncommon phenomenon, restricted only to obvious vagrants and strangers with *sexual predator* stamped on their brows.

This changed in 1962 when Doctor Henry Kempe published "The Battered-Child Syndrome." Similar studies of abused children in decades past had yet to rouse national public attention, and until that time there were no state laws specifically regarding the issue. It is speculated that the more general title of Kempe's article is what resonated with American readers (Davis 2005, 67). His research and the studies that followed led to massive attention from parents and lawmakers across the country. Eventually this resulted in laws regarding child sexual abuse, specifically

the reporting of it, to be passed in every state by the end of 1967 (Ibid.). If Bone's story took place even a decade later it would be *illegal* for Glen's rape, along with the years of inappropriate touching, to go unreported. A man like Sherriff Cole would not recognize sexual abuse on the same level as a "battered child," especially if he were dealing with a victim who had not been physically assaulted before being raped, as a majority of people are not. The collective consciousness of the nation slowly changed as the sixties entered the seventies, and the Child Protection Movement paved the way for the term "abuse" to include neglect, along with sexual and mental cruelty; this progress culminated with CAPTA being passed in 1974. Bone would have been around twenty-five. An optimist might imagine that if Bone were to come out with her story when she was older, as Florence Rush did, then the flood of studies, legislation, and awareness of CSA might have made the trial easier for her. Allison herself chose this optimistic path, telling KPBS: "I wanted a novel in which to my point of view, there is an almost happy ending. Bone actually gets out alive and goes to live with a good mother. I know that in many ways people find it a grim story. But I think it's leavened with a huge amount of compassion and working class humor" (2011). It is a necessary reminder that despite the obstacles facing CSA victims during Bone's time, it was not impossible to find hope in the aftermath, no matter the year.

Deciding if Bone would be that better off in Greenville, South Carolina in 2014 is something that is still debatable. Even with the many laws now in place to protect, help, and prosecute the victims and offenders of sexual crimes, many cases go unreported. Some reasons for this include: shame on the victim's behalf, threats or mental manipulation from the abuser, or a young child not understanding that being touched by someone in *that way* constitutes as a wrongful act. Additionally, there is the fear that should a victim press charges against his or her rapist, they must then face the possibility that a jury will not form a conviction, and the spectacle of the court proceedings will cause nothing but more pain. Equally disheartening is the fact that American society is still quick to blame the victim, particularly women, and scrutinize the credibility of the defendant based on facts as superfluous as her wardrobe choices. If *Bastard Out of Carolina* did take place in 2014, with every other element of Bone's history intact, it would still be incredibly difficult for Bone to find solace after she was raped. While various sources report different statistics about rape convictions, they all agree that rape is one of the most underreported crimes in America (Cling 2004, 221).

*Bastard Out of Carolina* is emotional, honest, and disturbing, but it is also fictional. This means Allison built Bone's world from the ground up, and the decisions that went into the creation of that world carry significance. The time period during which the narrative of *Bastard* occurs is a crucial element. Viewing it in a historical context puts the story at the center of a much bigger picture, and this only makes the novel's impact more poignant. Taking place just before institutional reformation regarding child abuse,

the novel portrays a very different story than one that might be set just five years later. Bone's being overlooked by almost everyone in her community is that much more heartbreaking when one remembers how recent is America's vigilance regarding CSA. The fact that there was no set definition of abuse at the time makes Bone's confusion about what happened to her that much more impactful on the reader. It is hard to find optimism when the many difficulties prosecutors face whisper between the pages, and it makes the hope that *is* found shine ever brighter. Examining the changes that happened between Bone's time and the present day instills a newfound appreciation for the courage and strength that families like the Boatwrights—and Dorothy Allison's—drew from each other.

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# POSTCONFESSIONAL POETRY AND THE CONCENTRIC CIRCLES OF IDEAS IN FRANK BIDART'S "ELLEN WEST"

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Outside the lines. The phrase evokes boundary transgression and, in the context of lineated poetry, a perceptive pun. Its double meaning also informs our understanding of the title chosen by Christopher Hennessy for his book *Outside the Lines: Talking With Contemporary Gay Poets* (2007). In the introduction to this collection of interviews with celebrated gay American poets writing today, Hennessy credits Frank Bidart for the book's genesis (2007, 3). Lauded as a poetic pioneer for whom the line is the basic unit of composition (Bidart 1983, 12), Bidart can be seen as the intellectual heir to confessional poets Robert Lowell and Elizabeth Bishop, sharing his literary parents' thematic concerns and virtuosity (Burt 2007, 158; Seshadri 2007, 169), though diverging from them in technique (Rector 2007, 130). Bidart's outsider status as a gay writer who aspires for classicism but envisages himself in a line of transgressive artists (Bidart 2007, 23, 27, 38) empowers him to "examine in a radical way the common elements of [his life]" (Ibid. 22). Bidart's stylistic innovations also distinguish him from his poetic progenitors, and he has in turn been heralded for inaugurating the postconfessional poetry genre, recuperating confessional poetry in a postmodern period characterized by relentless self-interrogation and authorial anxiety about the value of language and literature in a nihilistic world (Gray 1993, 725, 737; Crenshaw 1983, 57).

Since his first forays into poetry composition half a century ago as an undergraduate, Frank Bidart (b. 1939) has foregrounded these quintessential postmodern subjects in his verse; and "Ellen West," the final poem in his second volume of poetry, *The Book of the Body* (1977), exemplifies Bidart's multi-layered approach to addressing the existential questions that permeate conversations, literary and otherwise, in contemporary times. The poem, a dramatic monologue voiced by the eponymous character and interspersed with prose entries of her life, employs a fictional guise to recount the plight of a real woman ravaged by anorexia (Bidart 2009, 191). The monologue is complicated by Bidart's efforts to infuse the text, princi-

pally spoken by a female, with "the common elements" of his own life. Blurring the lines between fiction and reality is one of the poem's many convolutions, and it strives to unravel the "implications" (Bidart 2003, line 20) of the "given" (line 18) in both bodily and metaphysical terms; anorexia functions as an extended metaphor to scrutinize how natural and social constructs imperil self-determination (Gray 1993, 728).

The universal human longing for perfection culminates in Ellen's demise, but paradoxically, even as Ellen's body degenerates over the course of the poem, the poem radiates out in concentric circles by engaging with issues ranging in their abstraction (Mattison 2007, 44) from the narrow—a tragic story of one woman afflicted by the "wasting disease"—to the meta-poetic, notably exploring the relationship between poetry and fiction and the nature of artistic creation, including the creative destruction entailed in crafting either written form. Inextricably bound with these issues are the ontological questions preoccupying all canonical literature: What does it mean for humans to exist, and to what extent can we forge our destiny? "Ellen West" meditates on these four issues individually and in tandem, and can accordingly be construed as a consummate "poem of ideas" reflecting a broader postconfessional trend (Gray 1993, 719) in which poetry serves something other than itself (Moldaw 2004, 49), with anorexia being both a "clinical and universal condition" (White 2007, 110). Bidart's "choreographed" style, foregrounding voice (Moldaw 2004, 48), elegantly articulates these themes; the poem's free verse, with its combination of enjambement, end-stopped lines, and unjustified lineation, helps to embody the poem's messages. The figurative language in "Ellen West"—including metaphor, simile, imagery, symbol, personification, allusion, and repetition—along with Bidart's artful deployment of alliteration, punctuation, and typefaces, also amplify our understanding of an indelible poem and a poignant personage whose ordeal resonates powerfully with readers decades after the poem's publication.

At the risk of displeasing Bidart, who resists interviewers' requests to summarize his poems (Bidart 2007, 38), I will contextualize "Ellen West" and hazard a synopsis of the poem's plot, which centers on a woman who succumbs to death in her struggle with anorexia nervosa. Anorexia is a disease dating to the thirteenth century, when multitudes of devout Christian women would fast and intake only the eucharist (Brumberg 2001, 5). While motivations for extreme starvation have changed over time, with the supermodel supplanting Christ in many an anorexic's consciousness, the illness has persisted, disproportionality plaguing women. Authorities estimate that one in two hundred American women, approximately 790,000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2011), suffers from anorexia, and the disease's mortality rate is astounding; relapse is more common than recovery.<sup>1</sup> Ellen West was, in effect, a member of the majority, committing suicide after her institutional release (Bidart 2003, lines 304-305), and Bidart's poem crescendos to this irrevocable decision through a series of flashbacks juxtaposed with accounts of Ellen's experiences in a sanatorium, her eventual discharge after an unsuccessful treatment regime, and her last three days of life before self-poisoning. Bidart based the poem on a 1944 case study by Swiss existential psychiatrist Ludwig Binswanger (Gray 1993, 726), but no "Ellen West" per se appears in the original source; Binswanger writes of "the existential *Gestalt* to which we have given the name Ellen West" (1958, 725). Affixing a pseudonym to the poem's title character and untethering her from temporal and jurisdictional constraints (Gray 1993, 725) facilitates universalization of the protagonist as one of the many "grotesques" in Bidart's oeuvre who operate as figures for the ordinary (Vendler 2007, 113).

Bidart's quasi-generalized depiction of Ellen suggests that she represents humankind, but the dual (and dueling) prose and poetic accounts of her life confound attempts to understand the character's plight, and accordingly humanity's, while alluding to the theoretical debate about poetry and fiction as distinctive art forms. Bidart has asserted that no artistic medium is inherently superior to another (2007, 24), and he would likely subscribe to Heidegger's theory, articulated in the 1950 essay "Language," that the "[o]pposite of what is purely spoken, the opposite of the poem, is not prose. Pure prose is never 'prosaic.' It is as poetic and hence as rare as poetry" (qtd. in Howard 1973, 96-97). Bidart has been described as a narrative, as opposed to lyric, poet<sup>2</sup> keenly attuned to speech (Sleigh 2007, 26; Williamson 2007, 101), and his compositional technique, as expressed by a character in his poem "Borges and I," is to write "in prose with much blank white space" (qtd. in Mattison 2007, 42). Bidart has never been enamored of verse per se, but is instead attracted by poetry's ability to agglomerate different things within its structure (Bidart 1983, 12-13); incorporate multiple levels of language, which he argues is "the only way to even begin to embody the nature of things" (2001, 27); and accordingly textualize the fragmentation of modern life (Vendler 2007, 114).

Bidart endeavors to upset expectations in his writing (Bidart 2001, 27), and by eluding definitive genre clas-

sification as poetry or prose, "Ellen West" reveals the virtues and potential shortcomings of each form along four binaries: constraint versus liberation, external versus internal, dehumanization versus humanization, and apparent versus real truth. The criterion of compression indicates that "Ellen West" can be deemed a poem, as it condensed a four-part case study volume to a mere fifteen pages of verse when originally published (Gray 1993, 726; White 2007, 110). Yet Bidart incorporated excerpts of the case study's first part, a chronological narrative of Ellen's life, into his poem; extracted additional content from the case study; and channeled the original Ellen's voice in the poem's dramatic monologue (Gray 1993, 726). That noted, Bidart's poem tellingly omits allusions to the case study's psychoanalytic parts, as Bidart ultimately sought to use Ellen West as a "mirror" or alter ego after identifying with her alimentary obsession (Hennessy 2007, 32). The poem accordingly manifests Bidart's theoretical fascination with form, employing section breaks, or mega-ellipses, to demarcate between Ellen's exuberating poetic tale (including her closing epistle in verse, an unusual hybrid) and the four sterile prose accounts offered by Ellen's doctor and a disembodied narrator.

The prose sections contain a "flat informative exposition" of Ellen's life, primarily in confinement (Gray 1993, 724), while the poetic sections portray Ellen's astute, effervescent personality, even while institutionalized. Commenting on his creation, Bidart avers that, "I think what she says is true, though it's not the kind of thing you can put in a scholarly article" (2009, 192), conjecturing that the prose form is inhospitable to certain subjects. Yet prose does capture Ellen's physical deterioration, the decay of her external self, in precise terms, pinpointing her plummeting weight (92 pounds, down from 165 pounds [Bidart 2003, line 221]), and recording her doctor's observations on particular dates (lines 23-28, 96-111, 236-41); in parallel, the poetic account documents her mental anguish achronologically. This external/internal binary evokes what Bidart has claimed at times to be the "profoundest thing ever said about poetry," citing Yeats: "out of the argument with others we make rhetoric, out of our argument with ourselves we make poetry" (Bidart 1983, 29). To medical professionals and society, Ellen is simply a "case" (her quotation marks) (Bidart 2003, line 13), a "patient" (line 96) who is seen behaving like a "wild animal" (line 99) with a "strikingly evident" "homoerotic component" (line 108). The doctor's verdict here dehumanizes her relationship with a fellow patient and the person so vivified in verse. She eludes psychiatric diagnoses based on empirical observations – "obsessional neurosis" and "manic-depressive psychosis" (lines 239-40) – and successfully demands her discharge (line 241). While there is "nothing striking" (line 100) to the doctor logging the results of her physical examination, Ellen's dramatic monologue depicts a tormented soul and casts doubt on the reliability of visible perceptions. Indeed, the climactic prose passage delineating the final day of Ellen's life is laden with contingent words – she is "as if" transformed at home (line 296) and all heaviness "seems" to have fallen away from her (lines

301-02). While the poem's circumscribed prose sections confine themselves to the external realm, remaining largely disengaged from Ellen's interiority and thus incompletely rendering her life, the liberatory poetic sections penetrate Ellen's psyche, humanizing her and presenting a more voracious portrait of a beleaguered woman.

But to classify Ellen's poetic account as the unvarnished truth about her character and dismiss the poem's prose sections based on their ostensibly flawed view of Ellen would be too facile; discerning reality requires the poem's reader to read between the lines, to invoke this essay's opening image. Bidart believes that all language inexorably fails in its attempt to depict human experience accurately; poetry and fiction are both imperfect mimetic instruments, and the process of catharsis through artistic representation often threatens to backfire. Bidart writes that artists in general are perpetually driven to "make life *show* itself" in their works (1983, 31), and writers confront the particular challenge of "constantly fill[ing] language with something whose source is not language" (qtd. in Chiasson 2007, 56). For Bidart, a poem is "always inadequate to the enormity of what it wants to be" (Hennessy 2007, 36), with his "unrealizable ideal" being "to write as if the earth opened and spoke" (Bidart 1983, 32). Bidart's struggle can be compared to that of Ellen West, whose self-perception as a failed poet (2003, lines 104-05) may be linked to her decision to become a hunger artist, treating her body as unformed marble she must chisel relentlessly (White 2007, 110). Poetry is especially amenable to the anorexia analogy; poets manipulate language, whittling away to capture the pith of a phenomenon, and their perception that something unrecoverable is inevitably lost in the distillation process can induce an existential crisis. Writing of one poem that stymied him for two or three years because of the disparity between his capacious mental vision and limited poetic prowess, Bidart recounts feeling that if he "didn't solve this, [he] would die, cease to exist as a writer" (2007, 37); creative generation contains within it the seed of self-evisceration (Ibid., 30).

Bidart employs the metaphor of the body to describe how his poems originate, conceiving that poems and bodies both exist in space (2007, 37); his poetry aims to "embody that thing which has not yet found a body, a body of words" (Ibid. 33), and his character Ellen West has similarly grandiose ambitions, which remain unrequited. Ellen dismisses herself as a flaccid (in the sense of feeble) poet whose "hospital poems... are weak without skill or perseverance; only managing to beat their wings softly" (Bidart 2003, lines 104-05), an image evoking butterflies whose beauty is ephemeral and whose touch is nearly imperceptible, redolent of the apparent impression left by Ellen's poetry. Art is for Ellen the "'mutual permeation' of the 'world of the body' and the 'world of the spirit'" (lines 103-04), and an inability to conjoin body and spirit in life dooms her art. A month and a half after renouncing poetry as a medium of self-expression, she commits suicide (lines 300-04). Ellen's ceasing to write poetry foretells her demise, though not before a posthu-

mously published verse letter to the patient with whom she had a "homo-erotic" relationship (line 107); death liberates Ellen to write.

Maria Callas, Bidart's and Ellen's favorite singer (Bidart 2009, 192), symbolizes Ellen's "anti-self" in Yeatsian terms (that which one is not) as a peerless artist and forms the other half of Bidart's "double plot," his preferred structural device in longer poems (2009, 195). The Callas "digression" functions as an *ars poetica* (Gray 1993, 724), and Callas's voracious desire to lose weight replays Ellen's struggle with anorexia; in Ellen's rendering, after reaching the pinnacle of operatic success, Callas felt "that all she was trying to express / was obliterated by her body, / buried in flesh" (Bidart 2003, lines 126-28), triggering Callas's destructive dieting and a waning of her virtuosic voice (lines 130-48). While society blames an actual tapeworm for Callas's physical and vocal deterioration (lines 132-33), Ellen speculates that a more insidious figurative maggot may be culpable; "The *tapeworm* / was her soul... " (lines 135-36). The deviant theories Ellen proffers for Callas's (and her own) self-flagellation suggest its ultimate inexplicability:

Perhaps her mind, ravenous,  
still insatiable, sensed  
that to struggle with the *shreds* of a voice  
must make her artistry subtler, more refined,  
more capable of expressing humiliation, rage,  
betrayal. . .  
Perhaps the opposite. Perhaps her spirit  
loathed the unending struggle  
to *embody* itself, to *manifest* itself, on a stage whose  
mechanics, and suffocating customs,  
seemed expressly designed to annihilate spirit.  
(lines 149-59)

Re-enacting this debate about whether she "WILL NOT" or "cannot" relinquish her obsession with the ideal (line 13) at length in the poem's following section (lines 199-235), Ellen reifies the demon compelling her starvation as "my great / mystery," which "stands / before me.... " (lines 199-201), the "*refuser*" she is only able to slay in death (line 321).

Like Callas, Ellen performs on a stage, albeit the metaphorical stage of life, and its "customs" equally extinguish her spirit. She empathizes with Callas, who Ellen describes as midway through her performance in *Tosca* following up the famous line "... *Vissi d'arte* / —'I lived for art'— " (lines 162-63) with the voice of betrayal, "harrowingly" reaching for the notes to vocalize her final lament: "Art has *repaid me* LIKE THIS?" (lines 165-67). Yet while the public may mourn Callas as an artist in decline, Ellen perversely lauds Callas's triumph born of painstaking experience: "I felt I was watching autobiography— / an art; skill; / virtuosity" that distinguished Callas from her peers (lines 168-75). Ellen acknowledges, though, that even while Callas helped "create" an innovative style, the soprano must have known that the "dramaturgy [i.e., dramatical composition] of her recordings" had, within a few years, faced a slight obsolescence, that a stagnant style would

spell Callas's demise as an artist meriting public recognition (lines 178-89). The section concludes by reiterating the insoluble question of how Callas, and in turn Ellen, could rationalize her starvation: "—Is it bitter? Does her soul / tell her / that she was an *idiot* ever to think / anything / *material* could satisfy... / —Perhaps it says: *The only way / to escape / The History of Styles / is not to have a body*" (lines 190-98).

By choosing death, Ellen seems to acquiesce in this assessment, impelled to insanity by her "insistence on meaning" (Bidart 2001, 26).<sup>3</sup> On her last afternoon of life, she listens to "recordings" (Bidart 2003, line 300), perhaps one of Callas's arias now deemed passé by society,<sup>4</sup> and reads poems for the final time (line 300), maybe seeking to glean existential insights that never come. In one of the poem's rare similes, Ellen forsakes hope, stating that her quest "to stop [her] hunger with FOOD / is like trying to appease thirst / with ink" (lines 233-35), referencing the dual impossibilities of physical and poetic satiety and alluding to Ellen's graver dilemma: her demise follows from her incapacity to mold her body into "the image of her soul" (line 7) through starvation, to fuse the actual and ideal selves she thinks once coincided when she was a "girl" (line 22), before "nature's" cruel defilement of her body (line 93). Ellen's internal bifurcation, being "both in the book / and out of it" (line 39-40), as she articulates it, alienates her from other people, notably her circle of friends (line 306-19) and her husband, for whom she has "to give up [her] ideal" (line 83), an intolerable sacrifice represented in the poem through Ellen's revulsion for a couple sharing an intimate meal (lines 42-84). Ellen's damning self-assessment in her posthumous letter to a fellow patient—"I am crippled" (line 326)—starkly encapsulates her fraught condition as a postmodern subject. One of the poem's few rhymes indicates the artificiality of the force foreclosing her life; "each attempt / to poison an ideal / which often seemed to *me* sterile and unreal, / heightens my hunger" (lines 322-25), so she opts to die on the figurative "bed of vanilla ice cream" (line 3) fantasized about in the poem's first stanza; indulgence in the sweets so long denied (lines 296-99) precipitates her ascent to a heaven in which she is no longer "meat" (line 15) and her body and soul may be unified. The speaker of the poem's final prose passage claims that, in death, Ellen "looked as she had never looked in life – calm and happy and peaceful" (lines 304-05), the mellifluous alliteration and polysyndeton in the sentence suggesting personal and artistic transcendence.

Because "Ellen West," the final poem in *The Book of the Body*, resounds with this fatalistic chord, offering "no definitely reliable therapy" (line 240), aside from mortality, for its title character, Bidart's vision of human existence can appear remorseless, with poetry woefully unsuited to help us divine life's meaning and alleviate the human condition. However, critic Robert Gray expresses a tinge of optimism, arguing that while a character like Ellen West fails in her attempt to assemble the existential puzzle pieces scattered throughout the poem, readers can benefit from her confession (1993, 737). Bidart's most superlative

achievement may be his skill in reaching a resolution, in the sense of concluding his explication of the poem's themes, ranging from the concrete to the abstract, as opposed to artificially resolving the unresolvable (Bidart 1983, 16); he offers a realistic "glare of insight," rather than a "gift of light" (Bedient 2007, 167). The closing and signature of Ellen's final verse letter—"Your *Ellen*" (line 331)—ultimately confirms that all *Ellen* (in italics) embodies belongs to us, and that we (you – r (are)) are *Ellen*.

## END NOTES

1. Five to ten percent of anorexics die within ten years of contracting the disease, eighteen to twenty percent die within twenty years of contraction, and only thirty to forty percent ever fully recover (South Carolina Department of Mental Health 2012).
2. While Bidart states that writing lyrics has never been one of his central goals, he has increasingly been experimenting with the form (Bidart 2007, 24).
3. Following her release from the sanatorium, Ellen projects her anxieties about existence onto the passengers she encounters during the train ride home, which is "far worse" than expected and culminates in her relapse (Bidart 2003, lines 241-95).
4. These "recordings" are not specified to be Callas's, but the reference can be insinuated from the repetitive diction (Bidart 2003, lines 188, 300) [see Gray 1993, 729].

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# THE PECULIAR DEVIANCE OF AUTHENTICITY

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For much of my life, I thought the invocation of authenticity was a sleight of hand, one that smuggled an embattled reality past the postmodern border guard; abandoning claims of metaphysical truth, “the real” got renamed “the authentic,” defined by its gritty corporeality rather than its transcendence. Calling something authentic, as I saw it, was savvy word choice, a way of sidestepping the insufferable debate about whether or not “this table” is really “the table.” The more I thought about the concept, however, the clearer it became that authenticity is not, strictly speaking, synonymous with reality. The two concepts are certainly related as each purports to capture the actual, yet, etymologically, the two grew in different fields: “reality” is derived from the Middle French word *réalité*, signifying possession or property, which was itself a derivative of *réel* which, in legal use, meant “things and not people.” When reality is invoked, the emphasis is on the “thingness” of it all, that the real is an object identified, captured, and commodified. Conversely, authenticity is derived from the Greek root *authentēs*, meaning “of first hand authority” or “one who does a thing himself, a principal, a master, an autocrat.” The creative potential implied by the word’s root “master” is most easily apparent in another derivative, “author,” yet Lionel Trilling, in *Sincerity and Authenticity*, also locates a deviant spirit in the Greek roots of authenticity: “*Authenteo*: to have full power over; also, to commit a murder. *Authentes*: not only a master and a doer, but also a perpetrator, a murderer, even a self-murderer, a suicide” (1971, 131). Authenticity takes the subjectivity implied in “reality”—who, after all, owns those possessions?—and makes it explicit: when discussing the authentic, one isn’t talking about “thingness” as much as he or she is talking about how a thing has been created or destroyed.

I am aware that etymological discussions can be pedantic, especially when excavating Greek and Latin roots, and the idea that there are “deep truths” hidden in Western etymologies if only a person will take the time to dig them out is a notion I find laughable. Tracing the origins of a Western word isn’t going to reveal anything other than

what that word means in a Western context. As it happens, however, I am a Western academic writing in a Western tradition about authenticity as a Western value (to be even more specific, an American writing in an American tradition about an American value), one who is interested in how the concept of authenticity has been used to “master” experience, both my own and other’s. Throughout my life, authenticities have been presented to me as “deep truths,” even though whether or not something is deemed authentic depends on a multitude of factors, chief among them what it is the authenticator wants. Authenticity is not an achievable state; it is a critical abstraction, one that upends conventional notions of *normative* and *deviant* by portraying the predominant state (at least within a postmodern Western context), inauthenticity, as the inferior state. In consequence of this arrangement, authenticity comes to exemplify a peculiar sort of deviance, one that manages to be simultaneously inaccessible and authoritative.

Most accounts of authenticity start with the value’s emergence in the early modern era, yet I believe the idea’s durability can be better understood by starting in the future. *Star Trek*, perhaps the most precisely articulated public fantasy of humanity’s potential, presents a future where there is no greed or hunger or prejudice, a time and place where our better selves have won out. The starship Enterprise, flagship of this idyllic civilization, roams the galaxy on a single, continuous mission of curiosity, boldly going where no one has gone before. Its number one rule as it meanders about the galaxy looking into the strangeness and vastness of things is “The Prime Directive,” a rule which commands Starfleet personnel to never, under any circumstances, violate the autonomy of another civilization. “The Prime Directive is not just a set of rules; it is a philosophy,” the character Jean-Luc Picard, captain of the Enterprise D, explains, “and a very correct one. History has proven again and again that whenever mankind interferes with a less developed civilization, no matter how well intentioned that interference may be, the results are invariably dangerous” (“Symbiosis” 1988). Preserving the authentic is seen as more important than preserving

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life; rather than appealing to compassion or generosity, idealized humanity appeals to authenticity for guidance. Although the show's premise provides a forum through which people may imaginatively celebrate technological progress, lurking beneath that celebration is a deep distrust of such technological progress as deviance, that the preferable state-of-being lacks such progress.

I bring up the role of authenticity in *Star Trek* because I believe it highlights the pervasiveness of authenticity as a value in American popular culture. Politicians, products, and experiences are constantly being sold as "authentic," and authenticity has come to be celebrated by business executives, social workers, and seemingly everyone in-between (Gilmore and Pine 2007; Brown 2010). Yet as seemingly innocuous as the presentation of authenticity can be, those deviant undercurrents Trilling identified can turn the performance of authenticity into tragedy: Kurt Cobain, an artist who forever changed the terrain of popular music, wrote in his suicide note, "the worst crime I can think of would be to rip people off by faking it" ("Death of Kurt Cobain") a harrowing expression of the anxiety of authenticity. Likewise, Tupac Shakur was murdered, in no small part, because he felt it necessary to keep up a deviant lifestyle, to "keep it real" by showing that he wasn't just a so-called studio gangster. Indeed, it seems that despite being an artist of tremendous insight and sophistication, Tupac sadly felt that the authenticity associated with "the thug life" was what gave him his artistic appeal.

The reason authenticity has become so precious is that it offers a curious brand of secular mysticism: in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin argues "with the secularization of art, authenticity displaces the cult value of the work," suggesting that as cultural expressions become infinitely reproducible, an artifact's situation in space and time, its "aura," becomes the foundation for the original's authority (1968, 244). Whereas the original was traditionally valued for its ritual function, the way it demarcated sacred spaces, in an age of mechanical reproduction the original derives power from the experience generated by encountering its unique existence, an idea essential to the idea of "autonomous art" (i.e. art for art's sake). Benjamin saw this valorization of authenticity as an extension of art's "parasitic" relationship with ritual, one that delays an impending reversal wherein art will cease to be based on ritual and "[begin] to be based on another practice—politics" (1968, 224). It's a compelling argument, yet I think Benjamin too quickly dismisses people's need for ritual. The sanctification of authenticity is more than just a speed bump on art's road to revolution: it is redemptive deviance, soul in a soulless world. People make meaning in Modernity through authenticity as it is how we negotiate our desperate need to matter in an age characterized by anonymity.

Invocations of authenticity are not inherently mystic statements. Within literary and art criticism, authenticity is an essential notion as it describes the relationship between an expression and its author. For instance, identifying a

painting as an "authentic Matisse," or a short story as an "authentic Cather" is a forensic statement, one that establishes that a work of art was created by a specific artist. This is not to say that such statements aren't ontologically problematic as they often run into prickly questions—can Andy Warhol be called the author of a painting he never actually touched? At what point do Truman Capote's editorial contributions to Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* constitute collaborative authorship?—yet these are, for the most part, questions for courts and curators, the latter deciding where the work goes, the former where the money goes. Nelson Goodman aestheticizes this aspect of authenticity, arguing that "the aesthetic properties of a picture include not only those found by looking at it but also those that determine how it is to be looked at" (1951, 269). Goodman, however, is discussing how the professional distinguishes an original work from a forgery, disregarding contrary views as "Tingle-Immersion theory, which tells us that the proper behavior on encountering a work of art is to strip ourselves of all the vestments of knowledge and experience (since they might blunt the immediacy of our enjoyment) and submerge ourselves completely and gauge the aesthetic potency of the work by the intensity and duration of the resulting tingle" (1951, 270). Ultimately, Goodman is defending the value of education, in particular his ability to better identify the creator of a work than a layperson, an argument which doesn't help understand the tendency of a Modern populace which identifies "the resulting tingle" as authentic.

Authenticity takes on its mystic quality when used to describe experience rather than authorship. In his essay "The Death of the Author," Roland Barthes argues "the text's unity lies not in its origins, but in its destination" (1978, 148) a contention that would seemingly make authenticity, if not irrelevant, an insignificant formality—identifying the author of a work a matter of forensic pathology. Nevertheless, invocations of authenticity abound despite this death as Barthes's assessment does not address authenticity's more complicated experiential connotations. For example, when Willa Cather's fiction is described as "the West Authentic," its authenticity is perceived to be a product of Cather's experience living in Nebraska (Stegner 1985). On the surface, this appears to be another appeal to authorship, yet it is actually a complicated statement about subjectivity as it places value upon Cather's access to an experience, generalizing that experience to fulfill certain preconceptions—the biographical fact that Cather lived in the West is used to authenticate and generalize an idea of Westernness; or, in Barthes's terminology, through an appeal to origin, the destination of a text is authenticated. From one end, Henry Louis Gates argues against such essentializing paradigms in his article "Authenticity, or the Lesson of Little Tree" (1991), suggesting that "no human culture is inaccessible to someone who makes the effort to understand, to learn, to inhabit another world." From the other end, Susan Gubar questions *insider* perspectives, arguing that "authenticating maneuvers remain qualified strategies that can never completely

certify legitimacy, for creative artists—even those telling stories from their own repertoires—never fully possess or contain their creations” (1997, 48). Nevertheless, celebrating native perspectives while unmasking literary poseurs and “ethnic transvestites” has become a critical obsession in and outside the academy. Authenticity as an expressible experience has become perhaps the most valuable coin in literary/artistic currency.

This conflation and confusion of authenticity is nowhere more complicated than in my discipline, folklore studies. “Authenticity,” Regina Bendix argues in her history of the field, *In Search of Authenticity*, has been “used as an agent to define [folklore], differentiate it from other cultural manifestations, develop methods of analysis, critique competing theories, or create new paradigms” (1997, 5). For most of the field’s history, folklorists paradoxically located authenticity in anonymity. Those cultural expressions which were “communally” authored, created through shared processes passed down from generation to generation, were deemed “authentic” folklore. Distinguishing between authentic and inauthentic expression has been so essential for folklorists that there are terms for cultural performances that are *apparently* folkloric but not *authentically* folkloric. German folklorists introduced the term *folklorismus* to describe “second hand folklore,” the adaptation of a folk expression beyond its “natural” audience, and Richard Dorson, the architect of modern American Folkloristics introduced his own term, *fakelore*, to describe the adaptation of folkloric materials by individual authors (in particular, the work of his arch-nemesis, the “fakelorest” B.A. Botkin) (Dorson, *Folklore and Fakelore* 1976).

Following the lead of pioneering folklorists like Dell Hymes and Richard Bauman, the field of folklore studies radically altered its focus in the 1970s, recasting its subject as performance rather than tradition. Bendix writes:

Once individual performers... entered the discussion, the criterion of anonymity or nameless tradition began to unravel, and the problem of authenticity could have rendered itself obsolete. However, the vocabulary of authenticity that permeated disciplinary discourse escaped the paradigmatic changes. Original, genuine, natural, naive, noble and innocent, lively, sensuous, stirring—the string of adjectives could be continued. Folklorists since the eighteenth century have used them to circumscribe the longed-for quality that they saw encapsulated at first in folklore texts and later in folklore performance. (1997, 15)

The vocabulary of authenticity Bendix identifies is a vocabulary designed to describe experience; “the longed-for quality” of authenticity is not associated with the origin of a cultural expression, but with its destination. Contrary to the popular argument that folklore studies is “over authenticity,” the current turn toward performance simply moves the value from a vertical plane (tradition) onto a horizontal plane (feeling).

Because of this consistently complicated role of authenticity in folklore studies, in particular the field’s ongoing displacement of authorship with experience, a consideration of how folklorists have identified, approached and captured the authentic can help illuminate how the value is applied and celebrated experientially in other realms, be they literary, artistic, political or popular. Authenticity is, after all, more than just another value in folklore studies; it is the spirit of the field, the professional folklorist trained to distinguish what is “real” from what is “fake.” Although often presented as a judgment of material truth, folklorists are simultaneously making profound judgments of existential truth. William A. Wilson contends, “No other discipline is so concerned with discovering what it is to be human. It is this attempt to discover the basis of our common humanity, the imperatives of our human existence, that puts folklore study at the very center of humanistic study” (1988, 156). In this light, folklore studies seems to be an ideal base from which to contemplate what human experiences are deemed authentic and why.

Authenticity as an experiential value is a Modernist construction, first articulated in Jean Jacques Rousseau’s Romantic philosophy. According to Rousseau, a person’s authentic nature is corrupted by society, hence his dictum “man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains.” Rousseau argues that society is hostile to the rightness of unmediated experience, that “everything is good when it leaves the hands of the Creator; everything degenerates in the hands of man” (1762, 54). In his formulation, modern man, suffers from “the wound of reflection,” Rousseau’s term for the inability to experience life directly and genuinely; in contemporary clinical terms, what he describes would be called anhedonia, the inability to feel pleasure. In order to prevent this wound, Rousseau advocated a return to nature where humans might experience creation authentically, by which he meant without the mediating influence of modern society as it is that society which renders experience inauthentic. From the first, the inauthentic has been portrayed, paradoxically, as both normative and compromised, setting the stage for authenticity’s peculiar brand of deviance.

As important as authenticity is within Rousseau’s philosophy, it is equally crucial in Existential thought. Superficially encapsulated in Jean Paul Sartre’s slogan “existence precedes essence,” Existentialism contends that people “are” before they are anything of meaning. Although in the popular imagination the idea has become a caricature of nihilism—Existentialists think life is meaningless—it can be read as a rather optimistic appraisal of Being: in the absence of inherent or transcendent purpose, individuals are free to find their own purpose, and to do so, to deviate from the norm by making meaning for oneself, is to be existentially “authentic.” Soren Kierkegaard, progenitor of Existentialism, associated authenticity with “angest,” sometimes translated as dread, other times as anxiety. According to Kierkegaard, a person experiences dread when he or she confronts the horror of freedom, a state people both fear and desire; he rather playfully defines

dread as “a sympathetic antipathy and an antipathetic sympathy” (a pleasing repulsion and a repellent pleasure).<sup>1</sup> Sartre would later illustrate this notion of dread through the experience of a hiker walking a mountain path: the hiker fears that he might slip and fall into the abyss; more disconcerting, however, is the fear that he will hurl himself into the abyss for no other reason than he can. To live authentically one must deviate from the norm by accepting the power to create or destroy oneself, an idea which brings to the surface that hidden etymology of authentic identified by Trilling (*authentēs*: a self-murderer, a suicide). Conversely, to deny the dread and reject one’s freedom is to be inauthentic and live in “bad faith,” Sartre’s term for a sort of self-objectification wherein an individual constructs limits where there is “really” only possibility—“bad faith” is saying “I can’t” when you really can.<sup>2</sup>

For erstwhile Existentialist Martin Heidegger, authenticity was crucial as he divided experience into two realms, *Eigentlichkeit* and *Uneigentlichkeit* (authentic and inauthentic). For Dasein (a Heideggerian term which, against his wishes, might be read as “person”), living authentically means accepting that one is a being-towards-death (again conjuring the word’s dangerous etymology). It’s not so much a matter of accepting freedom as Dasein can never be free of his or her culture; Heidegger invented the word Dasein to capture the inextricable relationship between an “individual” and the “world”—as much as it is embracing the nothing (death) that punctuates one’s finite being and, in the process, accepting responsibility both for one’s self and one’s world. It’s not being free; it is, rather, seeing freely: “If Dasein discovers the world in its own way and brings it close, if it discloses to itself its own authentic being,” Heidegger wrote, “then this discovery of the world and this disclosure of Dasein are always accomplished as a clearing away of concealments and obscurities, as a breaking up of the disguises with which Dasein bars its own way” (2008, 167).

Bendix dismisses Existentialist conceptions of authenticity as fundamentally anti-social. She appeals to Theodor Adorno’s argument in *The Jargon of Authenticity* that Existentialists (especially Heidegger) elevated the value through a high-sounding but ultimately meaningless vocabulary (hence *The Jargon of Authenticity*). She writes, “Withdrawing from society in the search for the authentic being in a timeless realm, the individual flees interaction with society and history and his or her place within this relationship” (1997, 19-20). Her critique is more complicated but crucial in reference to Heidegger for he did not locate authenticity in a pre-social state. In fact, his notion of Dasein necessarily includes one’s own culture. Yet when Heidegger discusses Dasein as a product of the world, he is not referring to the world-at-large; he uses “world” in a restricted sense, the same way a person might refer to “the academic world” or “the art world.” For Heidegger, Dasein is a product of his or her immediate culture and that is the “world” to which he or she is responsible, other “worlds” be damned.

It’s here that my thinking diverges from Bendix’s, however. *In Search of Authenticity* is an indispensable book for folklorists, the first attempt to map the terrain of authenticity as a folkloristic value and identify the abuses facilitated in its name. Yet Bendix is short on solutions, at best aspiring to the removal of authenticity “from the vocabulary of the emerging global script” (1997, 7). Rather than stopping there, I believe appreciating authenticity’s peculiar deviance can respond to Bendix’s parting call for a turn in “attention toward learning to tell the story of why humans search for authenticity and why this search is so fraught with agony” (227-28). The search for authenticity, I believe, is a way of alienating a world that has alienated you—pursuing authenticity offers people an alternative to a normative, modern existence they consider inauthentic. Although my field is conceptualized as a study of folk groups, I find it telling that the groups most commonly studied are rarely groups to which folklorists belong, and it is in this way that folklore studies can be seen as an investigation of deviance: The study of folklore is a repudiation of the folklorist’s society. For example, Alan Lomax, one of the architects of authenticity as it has been conceptualized in folklore studies, believed folklore should be looked for in the “eddies of human society,” which is why he conducted his earliest fieldwork in American prisons (qtd. in Filene 2000). By locating authenticity anywhere but at home, folklorists implicitly critique the inauthenticity they perceive both in their own culture and themselves. Far from being antithetical to folkloristic conceptions of authenticity as a supposedly anti-social attribute, the Romantic and Existentialist definitions of authenticity as anti-social actually complement such conceptualizations: authenticity is portrayed as a deviant, even fugitive, quality that can be found anywhere other than where you are.

A Feminist critique of authenticity—it is, after all, usually men who look for authenticity and men who are usually deemed authentic—can help explain this appeal of authenticity as an anti-social attribute. In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir critiques Existential constructions of authenticity by pointing out that, as a woman, she can never define herself independent of social expectations and consequently cannot live “authentically”:

If her functioning as a female is not enough to define woman, if we decline to explain her through ‘the eternal feminine,’ and if nevertheless we admit, provisionally, that women do exist, then we must face the question: what is a woman? The fact that I ask it is in itself significant. A man would never get the notion of writing a book on the peculiar situation of the human male. But if I wish to define myself, I must first of all say, ‘I am a woman’; on this truth must be based all further discussion. (1949, 3).

The idea that one might “escape” the influence of society, de Beauvoir suggests, is a masculinist idea as only a man could think people “choose” their relationship to society. It’s a powerful critique, and I agree with de Beauvoir that authenticity is valued by the privileged, yet I think it’s sig-

nificant that the privileged rarely see themselves as authentic. Just as Rousseau, a Modernist, associated authenticity with an elusive premodern state, so too is authenticity associated with deviant, often remote cultures in contemporary formulations. That which is most authentic is conceptualized as deviations from the modern; or, more accurately, authenticity is a quality exclusive to cultural expressions outside “the norm”—it seems impossible to say something is “authentically mainstream.”

Unlike most social dialectics, the relationship between inauthenticity and authenticity reverses the conventional order as the normative state (inauthenticity) is seen as the compromised state. In this sense, the desire for authenticity is a masochist phenomenon, a way, perhaps, of dealing with the trauma of modernity; confronted with a hell of its own creation, the dominant society constructs deviant idylls through which it can understand its unhappiness. Or perhaps it’s a response to Renaldo Rosaldo’s notion of Imperialist Nostalgia wherein the privileged “mourns the passing of what they have destroyed” (1993, 68). Elaborating on this concept, bell hooks points out that “contemporary cultural strategies” do not “mourn, but celebrate the sense of a continuum of ‘primitivism.’ In mass culture, imperialist nostalgia takes the form of reenacting and reritualizing in different ways the imperialist, colonizing journey as narrative fantasy of power and desire, of seduction by the Other.... In the cultural marketplace the Other is coded as having the capacity to be more alive, as holding the secret that will allow those who venture and dare to break with the cultural anhedonia... and experience sensual and spiritual renewal” (1992, 26). Through the fetishizing of other’s authenticity, the privileged vicariously experience the life they think they lost (or destroyed) along modernity’s march.

Authenticity is not simply premodern in the sense of preindustrial or precapitalist or precolonial; however, it is also conceived as presocial, preliterate, preconscious, and prerational. At times it appears that the value is nearly pre-existent, as if the desire for authenticity is a desire to will oneself out of Being. In *Everyday Genius: Self-Taught Art and the Culture of Authenticity*, Gary Alan Fine argues that what gives the “outsider artist” his or her authenticity is the lack of self-awareness, a view which counters the great Modernist axiom “I think therefore I am” with “I don’t think therefore I am authentic.” Unfortunately, the statement undoes itself as to say one is authentic renders one inauthentic: recalling a woman who approached him during his fieldwork, asking that he write about her as an Outsider artist, Fine explains that since she identifies herself as an outsider, she is, in fact, an insider, reenacting the central catch of *Catch 22* (2004, 12). Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett outlines a similar conceptualization of authenticity at work in the 1990 Los Angeles Festival wherein the organizers presented folk expressions without explanation, endeavoring to keep such expressions incomprehensible, believing that “it is the lack of a shared history that produces authenticity” (1994, 239). The idea is a wholesale repudiation of the Enlightenment belief in the power of

reason: it is understanding itself, the festival suggests, that makes an experience inauthentic. In both these conceptualizations, the construction of authenticity copes with more than the technological alienation of modernity: it appears to offer a salve for the sting of self-awareness.

I wish to emphasize that I’m not arguing authenticity as it is conceptualized does not exist. Conceived as premodern, presocial, preconscious, and all those other prefixed adjectives, authenticity is not an ideal form: it is, rather, an inaccessible, incomprehensible deviation. Assume for a moment that “out there somewhere” an undiluted, unnegotiated, untranslated cultural expression exists (exceedingly unlikely as culture is a gregarious phenomenon, one that courts the corrupting influence of others). In order to remain “authentic” it would have to be undilutable, unnegotiable, untranslatable; in other words, it would have to be inaccessible as to encounter it would be to pollute it. In *Simulation and Simulacra*, Jean Baudrillard discusses the Tasaday, a tribe that had lived for centuries without encountering any other humans, and how the Philippine government preserved the Tasaday’s authenticity by outlawing any investigation of the tribe; Baudrillard calls the act “a simulated sacrifice of [the] object to save its reality principle” (1994, 7). In other words, in order to maintain the authenticity of the tribe, they could only be imagined as to look upon them with modern eyes would be to render them inauthentic. The authentic apparently can only exist in absence.

Just because something is inaccessible, however, doesn’t mean it’s not there. I’ve come to think of authenticity as a hauntological phenomenon, something simultaneously present and absent. Jacques Derrida introduced “hauntology” (hauntologie in French, a near homonym of ontology [ontologie]) as a way of understanding the “specter” of Marxism after the end of history. Derrida argues that Marxism returned to its more influential “ghostly” form (the opening line of *The Communist Manifesto*: “a specter is haunting Europe—the specter of communism”) once it lost its cumbersome presence in the Soviet Union. Broadening the concept, Derrida argues that we should learn to “talk with [ghosts], how to let them speak or how to give them speech or how to give them back speech, even if it is in oneself, in the other, in the other in oneself; they are always there, specters, even if they do not exist, even if they are no longer, even if they are not yet” (2006, 176). In her book *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, Avery F. Gordon similarly encourages social scientists to consider hauntological phenomena believing it can help resolve “the paradox of tracking... that which makes it mark by being there and not there at the same time” by opening up “a different way of seeing, one that is less mechanical, more willing to be surprised,” that “[links] imagination and critique” (1997, 6, 24). The idea is appropriately vague, yet I think it can help people make sense of the ongoing role authenticity plays both in folklore studies and in popular culture; even if in its absence, the value shapes us.

Rather than never saying “the A word” (a move eerily reminiscent of the folk belief that one might conjure a spirit by saying its name), which will only further isolate Folklore Studies from public concerns (authenticity being so important in popular discourse), folklorists must learn how to speak with the peculiar deviance of authenticity’s ghost. “The result will not be a more tidy world,” Gordon writes in *Ghostly Matters*, “but one that might be less damaging” (1997, 19). Indeed, the desire, whether Romantic, Existentialist, folkloristic or otherwise, is real even if the object eternally defies it, and instead of making the desire taboo, folklorists can provide a model for thinkers everywhere by coming to terms with authenticity’s impossibility, not its impropriety. Certainly too many violent injustices have been perpetrated in the name of authenticity, but that doesn’t make the word or even the concept “evil.” What made those actions fiendish was the mistaken belief that authenticity can be substantiated, that it can be located and captured. Authenticity might exist, but I must accept that I have the same chance of capturing it as I do of shaking hands with my shadow.

## END NOTES

1. Although Kierkegaard elaborates on the idea of “angest” throughout his work, the clearest articulation of the concept is available in *The Concept of Anxiety*.
2. Sartre outlines his hiker’s dilemma in “Part Four” of *Being and Nothingness* (Sartre’s formulation of “Bad Faith” is explicated in “Part One” of *Being and Nothingness*).

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# THE DISABLED AS DEVIANT: SAMUEL BECKETT'S REJECTION OF NARRATIVE PROSTHESIS

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A man of deeply misguided character populates much of Samuel Beckett's prose. Found in stories such as "First Love," "The Expelled," and "The End," this nameless man is disturbingly flawed. This deviant character revels in his flaws, which include coprophilia, voyeurism, impulse control dysfunction, sociopathy, incontinence, abusiveness, selfishness, poor hygiene, narcissism, exhibitionism, cowardice, weakness, dishonesty, laziness, sex with prostitutes, unwillingness to conform, hatred of children, and general apathy. The main character, the Deviant of the stories,<sup>1</sup> meanders through a seemingly meaningless existence often mired in a literal filth only exceeded by the horrors of the misanthrope's internal life. There is, though, a profound textual gesture generated by Beckett through the Deviant: the Deviant is *disabled*. His disability is made apparent through examination of the narrator's description of the character's various mental and physical afflictions. Yet, Beckett's character never identifies himself as disabled, and for this reason it is not difficult to imagine that the reader never conceives of the Deviant as disabled. Disability, though, is often used within narrative as a means by which to mark characters as special and justify conflict within the narrative. Through the creation of his Deviant, Beckett's gesture destabilizes the notion of disability by rejecting the common narrative trope of disability; rather than marked as disabled, the Deviant is simply expelled by humanity.

Few literary theorists have interpreted the Deviant as disabled, despite the fact that persons exhibiting traits such as coprophilia (sexualization of feces), sociopathy, incontinence, and the many other flaws exhibited by the Deviant could easily be considered labeled as impairments. The notable exception to this, of course, is Hamm in Beckett's play *Endgame*, whose blindness and infirmity are seen "as metaphors for alienation and solitude in the modern world."<sup>2</sup> The Deviant of Beckett's short stories who suffers because of both his physical and mental ailments, however, is left under-discussed as a disabled

character. One wonders if this lack of acknowledgment of the Deviant as disabled is perhaps due to the fact that the Deviant is so disturbing that he does not elicit the pity that may be necessary to warrant the societal label "disabled." At best, the Deviant is comic, evoking laughter from the viewer, who, again, does not see a disabled person in need of help, but only an object so awkward and horrifying that he is funny.

Through the creation of a character who is so revolting and so deeply dislikable by many, Beckett rejects the paradigm of "narrative prosthesis" described by David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder in their text *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse*. Mitchell and Snyder argue that the conventional function of disability in narrative has been to either mark a character as "special" and to provide the protagonist with something to overcome, a "crisis" to resolve (2000). Beckett's "First Love," "The Expelled," and "The End," however, present no crises, and mark no characters as "special." The narratives attempt to overcome no adversity, and the Deviant does not identify himself, nor is he ever identified by others, as disabled. Beckett's rejection of such narrative prosthesis, in which disability motivates the central crisis of the story, does not act simply as a turning away from the traditional treatment of disability of narrative. Beckett's rejection of narrative prosthesis also acts as an utter rejection of the metaphorical prosthetic device of reintegration into society by "fixing oneself" and conforming to the norms of society. By the very virtue of rejecting the prosthetic, Beckett refuses to acknowledge the disabled as "different," and thereby destroys the need for the prosthesis because there is then no motivation to conform oneself to fit the social definition of normal or "able-bodied."

## The Deviant as Disabled

Narrative prosthesis, argue Mitchell and Snyder, is at the core of narrative itself. It is the metonymical trope used to both generate conflict (the disability) and the resolu-

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tion (the act of replacement through prosthetic). Narrative prosthesis involves a fundamental reliance upon disability in order to create conflict and mark of differences. The prosthesis traditionally acts in three ways, which can be summed up as follows:

- 1) As a means by which to “fix” characters who need fixing. (The drive for prosthesis drives the protagonist towards rehabilitation).
- 2) As a means by which to mark characters that needs fixing, providing them with motivation (either good or bad) and driving conflict within the narrative.
- 3) As a metonym for conflict itself—the narrative relies on disabled characters as a means by which to represent the body and our need to control it. (Mitchell and Snyder 2000)

Beckett, however, rejects these functions of narrative prosthesis through the presentation of a character who is so deviant that he, despite his disability, does not elicit sufficient pity to be marked as disabled. The Deviant of “First Love,” “The Expelled,” and “The End” is *profoundly* deviant, and so the desire to integrate him into society as “disabled” is neither manifested by the reader or by the characters populating Beckett’s narrative. The Deviant of these stories is expelled—cast out—as are many of Beckett’s protagonists from the very beginning.

Mitchell and Snyder argue that narratives must remove blights like Beckett’s Deviant in order to reach resolution. “First Love” begins with the expulsion of the Deviant from his father’s house; the Deviant of “The Expelled” is literally thrown out, the door slammed behind him; and “The End” begins with the Deviant’s expulsion from a “charitable institution.” Each story begins with what, for many narratives, would be the end. Insofar as the Deviant “villain” of traditional narrative is removed from society through expulsion, imprisonment, or institutionalization, the narrative should come to a happily prosthethized resolution in which the blight has been removed and normalization has been achieved. Instead, Beckett’s narratives follow the Deviant as expelled, often listless and lost, through a series of perversities that, in the end, result in the Deviant’s continued ostracization—hence the stories end as they begin.

Contrary to the demands of narrative prosthesis described by Mitchell and Snyder, the ailments suffered by the Deviant do not seem to act as a marker of heroism or villainy in any of these stories. Simply, the Deviant does nothing particularly special other than *be* deviant. In large part, he does nothing good that suggests he is a hero, nor is his villainy of any significant kind: he saves no lives, nor takes any. No significant crime is committed nor prevented; the world continues as usual. As in many of Beckett’s narratives, *nothing happens*. In a story in which nothing happens, one cannot easily identify a hero or a villain. The Deviant’s crime is nothing more than being disturbing and disgusting. Thus, no hero nor villain is marked as “special.” The Deviant just *is*.

The Deviant of “First Love,” “The Expelled,” and “The End,” rather than doing anything that would result in the generation of a plot, engages in acts that seem obviously disgusting, and yet he makes little note of their deviance as deviance. The Deviant of “The End” for example, goes through pains to describe seemingly deviant actions: “Certain evenings, when the weather was fine and I felt equal to it, I fetched my chair into the area and sat looking up into the skirts of the women passing by” (Beckett 1995, 78-99). In presenting this fact to the reader, the Deviant shows no concern that this act itself is problematic as he presents it in the same way he presents his description of the weather.

Conversely, the Deviant is aware that others are bothered by him: “My oddities, that’s the expression she used, did not alarm her,” says the Deviant of “The End,” speaking of finally finding a landlady who will take him in (Beckett 1995, 84). Similarly, he relates,

I perfected a method of doffing my hat at once courteous and discreet, neither servile nor insolent. I slipped it smartly forward, held it a second poised in such a way that the person addressed could not see my skull, then slipped it back. To do that naturally, without creating an unfavorable impression, is no easy matter. (83)

The Deviant describes a religious “orator” who points at the deviant and encourages others to revile him: “Look at this down and out,” he vociferated, ‘this leftover. If he doesn’t go down on all fours, it’s for fear of being impounded. Old, lousy, rotten ripe for the muckheap” (94). Yet, despite this awareness, those acts which one would assume he would go through great pains to hide, are described with non-chalance by the Deviant who, himself, is the narrator: “He drew his wife’s attention to the pustule on top of my skull, for I had removed my hat out of civility,” speaking of a child (58). Speaking of a child in “The Expelled,” he says: “I would have crushed him gladly; I loathe children, and it would have been doing him a service, but I was afraid of reprisals” (51). When speaking of his love for a woman he relates, “Would I have been tracing her name in old cowshit if my love had been pure and disinterested?” (35) The Deviant stumbles about through the narrative engaging in his deviance in a paradoxically mundane way, aware of others’ revulsion and yet unaware of any reason that revulsion should motivate him to change or cause him to hide his deviance from the reader.

The Deviant does not describe himself as disabled or mentally ill and the reader experiences the entirety of the narrative through this first person perspective as provided by the narrator. The reader is therefore placed in the position of reading as if he *is* the Deviant, never considering the possibility of mental illness or disability. A significant reason why disability does not come to mind when reading the story is perhaps because the Deviant does not regard himself as “disabled.” In Epicurean fashion, he simply experiences his life as one he will continue to be able to suffer, or it will end. Consider in “First Love” the Deviant’s list of his pains:

Those of the mind, those of the heart or emotional conative, those of the soul (none prettier than these) and finally those of the frame proper, first the inner or latent, then those affecting the surface, beginning with the hair and scalp and moving methodically down, without haste, all the way down to the feet beloved of the corn, the cramp, the kibe, the bunion, the hammer toe, the nail ingrown, the fallen arch, the common blain, the club foot, duck foot, goose foot, pigeon foot, flat foot, trench foot and other curiosities. (Beckett 1995, 33).

This description is left behind quickly. It is a frank and detailed description of what would, if one were to see it, likely be thought of as physical ailment and disability. The Deviant does not present this list to the reader as one asking for acknowledgement of disability or for pity. Instead, it is a simple description of the causes of pain to be included in a list with emotional, spiritual and mental pains. One might imagine that if a man with a top hat and a cane rattled off this list to a crowd, it could easily be perceived as an invitation to a Barnum and Bailey "freak show" where the reader is encouraged to gawk at a parade of oddities. The Deviant, though, encourages no gawking. While the reader may well laugh at the Deviant's absurdity, the call to look upon him for the purpose of acknowledging his disability never occurs. There is no entreatment for pity, and none is elicited. He simply lists his ailments, as if they are ailments from which the reader herself may well suffer.

Similarly, in "The Expelled" and "The End," the Deviant describes his deviance as if it was commonplace. The Deviant of "The End" relates, "My appearance still made people laugh, with that hearty jovial laugh so good for the health" (Beckett 2000, 81, 83). His smell and appearance is so unappealing that he finds himself unfit for staying among animals in stables: "No, they said. I still stank, but with a stink that pleased me." The Deviant of "The Expelled" describes his walk: "What a gait. Stiffness of the lower limbs, as if nature had denied me knees, extraordinary spaying of the feet to right and left of the line of march. The trunk on the contrary, as if by the effect of a compensatory mechanism, was flabby as an old ragbag, tossing wildly to the unpredictable jolts of the pelvis" (50). These short stories are filled with such descriptions exceeded in their vileness only by the Deviant's joy at finding "a heap of dung" on which to sleep, his desire to "lynch children... with the utmost pleasure," and his escape from the birth of his child when, for the first time, it came into his "heart to leave a house without being put out" (86, 52, 45). The Deviant presents each vile incident to the reader as if they are mundane. While the Deviant's banal style adds to the comic effect of the reader's experience of the deviance, it also acts to continue to undermine the need for pity.

It may well be that if pity is not elicited, it becomes far more difficult for the reader to label the ailments presented to her as "disabilities." For example, the Deviant

of "The End," "The Expelled," and "First Love" describes his obsession with feces, though he never labels this obsession as a mental illness. Whether his obsession with feces is born from a sexual enjoyment or incontinence is difficult to tell, and, again, he relates it to the reader as if it was unexceptional. The Deviant of "The Expelled" says of his childhood: "I had then the deplorable habit, having pissed in my trousers, or shat there, which I did fairly regularly early in the morning, about ten or half past then, of persisting in going on and finishing my day as if nothing had happened" (50-51). One realizes that what he believes to be "deplorable" is not soiling himself, but the difficulty of trying to walk throughout the day as if he had not. Similarly, the Deviant of "First Love" takes the time to write the name of his lady love in a cow patty, and the Deviant of "The End" enjoys the smell of feces on his person. These actions and traits would often be considered symptomatic of mental illness, yet the man receives little help within the narrative and little, if any, sympathy from the reader.

The Deviant also revels in sexual aberrancy, though this aberrancy often finds a willing participant. The Deviant of "First Love" displays a violent disdain for women, saying of a prostitute, "I considered kicking her in the cunt" (Beckett 1995, 31). Yet he shortly thereafter willingly participates in sex with her, coming to obsess about her enough to carve her name in feces. The Deviant of "The End" describes sexuality and often frowned-upon sexual behaviors, again, with nonchalance:

One can masturbate up to the age of seventy, and even beyond, but in the end it becomes a mere habit. Whereas to scratch myself properly I would have needed a dozen hands... It was in the arse I had the most pleasure. I stuck my forefinger up to the knuckle. Later, if I had to shit, the pain was atrocious... I discovered my trousers all wet. That must have been the dogs. I personally pissed very little. (93)

The Deviant, though he seems to enjoy looking up the skirts of unaware women, describes masturbation with little interest. His description of scratching himself, perhaps due to his anal psoriasis and eczema, seems indicative of far greater pleasure. Thus, the Deviant is both deviant in his enjoyment of forbidden sexualities—whether they be voyeuristic, anal, or coprophilic—and deviant as he has little interest in the sexuality that society may deem permissible or "normal."

Ultimately, the Deviant suffers from numerous ailments. His descriptions of his gait, his feet, his pustules, his psoriasis, his sexuality, his obsession with feces, and his mental and physical pains act as evidence that the deviant could be labeled physically disabled and mentally ill. Even the nonchalance with which the Deviant describes his hatred of children and disdain for women could be indicative of sociopathy, again warranting the assistance that comes with the label "mentally ill." Yet, at best, the reader is likely to laugh at the Deviant, perhaps enthralled or horrified by him, never recognizing a need for help on

the part of the Deviant. The fact that the Deviant elicits our laughter and our scorn rather than our pity may well be the reason why he goes largely unlabeled as “disabled.”

Beckett’s Deviant resists all of the common literary uses of characters with disabilities, such as those categorized by Leonard Kriegel: the *demonic cripple*, who is mad at the world and seeks revenge; the *charity cripple*, who is acceptable because of the sympathy he elicits (sometimes insincerely); and *the realistic cripple*, who accepts his lot in life; and the *survivor cripple*, who has become an inspiration to the nondisabled. The Deviant, however, resists all of these classifications for one very simple reason: he is simply not a “cripple.” The social construct “cripple” does not apply to him. If we are to understand “cripple” and other such notions as social constructs that do not exist in nature, but are rather developed by society as a means by which to generate understanding of the world through demarcation, then it is difficult to apply such classifications to Beckett’s character. Yes, the Deviant has a clubfoot, and awkward gait, and mental illness, but he is unlikely to be acknowledged as “crippled” in favor of the classification “deviant” by the reader. Thus, Beckett accomplishes something profound. He parades before the reader a character who, by the very structures that society uses to define itself, should be understood as disabled and therefore warrant pity; however, he is so unappealing that the reader is unlikely to classify him as disabled. The reader is too busy being revolted to force upon the Deviant the stigma of cripple. To quote Kriegel,

The cripple is the creature who has been deprived of his ability to create a self. If others cry, like God from the burning bush, ‘I am that I am,’ the cripple in literature is expected to submit to the cries of others, to say, ‘I am what you tell me I am.’ (1987, 33)

The Deviant, however, is too busy being grotesque for the reader to take the time to impose a crippled self-hood upon him. Beckett’s Deviant, perhaps ironically, stands steadfast in the face of common literary trope making obscene gestures not for passersby, but for the fun of it.

It would seem easy to apply Kriegel’s notion of *demonic cripple* to the Deviant. After all, the character is monstrous in his almost Caliban-esque appearance and behavior. Yet, the marking of disability that is the hallmark of Mitchell and Snyder’s narrative prosthesis is missing. Simply, even if one suggests that despite the tendency to miss, on a first pass, the Deviant’s disability, he in, in fact, disabled and monstrous and therefore he meets Kriegel’s definition of the *demonic cripple*. Note, however, that he is not a villain. He is no Caliban. He is, for the most part, nobody. We cannot assert that he is marked as a hero like Christ nor is he marked as a villain. Thus he *cannot* be the demonic cripple, as he is neither demonic nor is he likely to be acknowledged as crippled.

The Deviant is not an avenging force, taking out his angst against a world that refuses to accept him due to his ability, nor is he Richard III, a visibly marked villain. He is neither prophet nor seer; no cosmic irony awaits his

Oedipal blindness. He is not a shiny example of overcoming the odds; he also does not accept his lot in life as a realistic “crippled” person, since he never acknowledges himself as such, nor does he elicit charity. The Deviant, simply, just is. He has shuffled by us, unnoticed, not in spite of his maladies, but because the reader, due to her own intolerance, must tear her eyes away from him as quickly as possible, thereby leaving behind Kriegel’s categories. Unscathed, the Deviant is likely all the better off for it, unaware of the lack by which society defines his less unappealing kin.

### Prosthesis and Deviance

The Deviant’s ailments are not only unlabeled as “disabilities,” they are also untreated as disabilities. The Deviant does not seek help, and others rarely offer it to him. There is no attempt to “fix” the Deviant; he simply wanders through the narrative. In this way, Beckett’s “First Love,” “The Expelled,” and “The End” reject the narrative prosthesis that populates almost all literature as described above as having three functions: The Deviant resists the narrative prosthetic as a means by which to “fix” him; he is not driven toward rehabilitation. He is not marked by his disability, but instead by deviance and thus does not elicit the pity necessary to drive the prosthetic desire to “fix” him. Nor does his disability exist in a metonymic relationship with the narrative’s conflict as there is nothing that can be recognized as a conflict driven narrative in the three stories (Mitchell & Snyder 2000). “First Love,” “The Expelled,” and “The End” thus reject the disability that is considered by Mitchell and Snyder to be central literature.

Mitchell and Snyder write of disability in literature: “Disability pervades literary narrative, first, as a stock feature of characterization and, second, as an opportunistic metaphorical device” (2000, 47). Firstly, then, the disability, as in the case of Oedipus, acts to lend a distinctive idiosyncrasy to any character that differentiates the character from the anonymous background of the “norm.” In the second instance, disability also serves as a metaphorical signifier of social and individual collapse. This “materiality of metaphor” that Mitchell and Snyder describe is the use of disability to metaphorically indicate a social crisis that must be resolved in the narrative. What analysis of Beckett’s prose in “First Love,” “The Expelled,” and “The End” reveals is that he rejects the entirety of narrative prosthesis.

Investigation of Beckett’s treatment of the Deviant reveals that Beckett’s rejection of narrative prosthesis is a significant reason why the Deviant is not immediately identified as “disabled” by the reader. Rather, the Deviant is expelled uniformly by Beckett, the reader, and, often, by the Deviant himself. He is left to suffer for his sin of existence as deviant. Given the history of disability, the current treatment of disability by society and literature as a problem to be solved, and the treatment of the disabled as those who should be “rehabilitated” and “reintegrated,” one comes to realize that labeling The Deviant “disabled”

would likely result in having to integrate the Deviant into society. While current social trends require that people with disabilities be integrated into society (usually through some form of prosthesis) we are likely loath to integrate the Deviant due his disturbing nature. Beckett rejects narrative prosthesis by virtue of rejecting the Deviant—who refuses reintegration and rehabilitation—and presenting him to the reader *as is*, without a comforting metaphorical or literary masking device. Simply, the Deviant is presented without a prosthesis and without the desire to be prosththesized.

Beckett's work often rejects traditional narrative structure as a whole. In "First Love," "The Expelled," and "The End," there is little, if any, plot to speak of. The Deviant seems to meander through his life, expelled from one place and then another, occasionally yelled at or laughed at by the onlookers. The Deviant engenders no pity from the other characters nor from the reader. He is profoundly vulnerable in his expulsion, yet his deviance and the nonchalance with which he treats his own expulsion results in little empathy. Mitchell and Snyder discuss such vulnerability:

The inherent vulnerability and variability of bodies serves literary narratives as a metonym for that which refuses to conform to the mind's desire for order and rationality. Within this schema, disability acts as a metaphor and fleshly example of the body's unruly resistance to the cultural desire to "enforce normalcy." (2000, 48)

Yet despite the description of the Deviant's pains, expulsion, and mental illness, Beckett does not describe the Deviant as vulnerable. Therefore, the reader is likely to feel as if such expulsion is warranted, and even the need to expel the Deviant from the narrative herself.

According to Mitchell and Snyder, "*narrative prosthesis* is meant to indicate that disability has been used throughout history as a crutch upon which literary narratives lean for their representational power, disruptive potentiality, and analytical insight" (2000, 49). Yet in "First Love," "The Expelled," and "The End," the Deviant is not presented as disabled but, rather, as deviant, and object to be expelled rather than fixed and reintegrated. The deviance certainly has disruptive potentiality—yet it disrupts nothing but the reader. There is no narrative arc that the disability of the Deviant disrupts, and thus there is no resolution upon which one can rest one's "analytical insight," revealed through the prosthesis, regarding the nature of man or existence as described by Mitchell and Snyder.

It is exceedingly difficult to argue that the disability of the Deviant is intended to act as a marker of some kind, when one is unlikely to think of the Deviant as "disabled." Moreover, disability does not forward the plot of "First Love," "The Expelled," and "The End," as there is none. Again, that deviance acts as a means by which to disrupt the reader herself instead. The Deviant presents himself, exhibitionistically, and the

reader feels compelled to look away, and yet cannot. The depth of perversity that the Deviant's illnesses engender likely enthrall her.

This awareness of deviance, rather than disability is far more reminiscent of the "freak shows" of a bygone age. The Deviant presents his perversities to the reader: writing in "cowshit," revealing his disturbing desire to "kick her in the cunt," and his equally disturbing fantasy about lynching children. The reader is given an opportunity to revel in these horrors, watching voyeuristically. This voyeuristic viewing, if considered from the perspective of Henri-Jacques Stiker's *A History of Disability*, is a regression: "This new awareness of disability, this new revelation of the social fact, will be represented by the notion of... 'rehabilitation'" (1999, 121). Beckett's character is denied rehabilitation as our current social order would demand. One wonders, then, if Beckett's work is simply a step backwards into the treatment of disability as a means by which to mark characters as flawed and worthy of expulsion—some grotesque reminiscence of an era marred by freak shows and insane asylums.

Perhaps not. The emphasis in "First Love," "The Expelled," and "The End" is not on disability but, rather, on expulsion. Beckett is turning the narrative gaze on the metaphorical Caliban *after* his expulsion: "The ascription of absolute singularity to disability performs a contradictory operation: a character 'stands out' as a result of an attributed blemish, but this exceptionality divorces him or her from a shared social identity" requiring, then, a reintegration for the sake of resolution (Mitchell and Snyder 200, 55). This certainly seems true of the Deviant in part, yet that exceptionality of the character, by virtue of experiencing it *after expulsion* negates the impetus to "reintegrate" the character into a shared social identity. The reader *wants* the Deviant to stay out. The Deviant never presents his deviance for the purpose of viewing, rather he shares them with the reader *as if they are not deviant*. Thus, the very notion of the freak show that parades people *as oddities* is disturbed.

### The Reader as the Deviant

The Deviant is not externalized as an object that can be mocked. Instead, through the nature of first person narrative, the reader wears him. The reader is likely appalled at her experience of the Deviant in the same way one would feel a desperate need to scrape filth from one's skin. If the reader can expel the Deviant, if the reader can exit the tent and leave the oddities behind after the show, then the resolution of enjoyment of the freak show can be experienced. However, Beckett denies the reader such a resolution, requiring that she continue to observe and experience the deviant *after expulsion*. In this way, the Deviant is both expelled and, yet, cannot be expelled by the reader who experiences him. The reader may laugh, but that laughter must also turn inward to the reader's own deviance because the Deviant is not pointed *at* through the narrative structure, but, rather, through the first person narrative, is *experienced*.

It is through this contradiction, in which the Deviant is expelled and yet cannot be expelled, that we recognize Beckett's rejection of the narrative prosthesis. Rather than rejecting the deviance, which many would consider a "disability," in order to propel the narrative and mark the body of the Deviant as special, Beckett instead engages a notion of bodies reminiscent of Bordo and Cixous. He "writes the body," presenting it and all of its flaws, in detail, not as a means by which to motivate conflict, but, rather, as a means by which to figuratively flesh out the self. The self that he chooses to present us with, though, is that of the expelled Deviant through first person narrative. As a result, Beckett turns the reader's gaze not just towards those we do not want to have to look upon, but upon ourselves.

The reader is subsumed by Beckett's prose in "First Love," "The Expelled," and "The End" by the implications of the narrator's use of first person personal pronouns. We read the narrative as if we were reading our own diary through the first-person experience. Therefore, we cannot experience his narrative without taking on the flesh of the Deviant himself. We are forced to experience that which we wish we could expel from ourselves: our sexual, moral, and physical deviance. Thus, Beckett is not relying on narrative prosthesis in order to forward a non-existent plot. Rather he is rejecting the prosthetic and forcing the reader to accept the experience of the disabled, whether disabled by expulsion, mental illness, or by physical ailment. The reader hobbles away from the narrative sickened but glad to be free from the Deviant: like the Deviant, the reader is not seeking resolution, but escape. Ultimately, it is the reader who is marked.

A deep reading of Beckett reveals the insight that one cannot expel deviance; one cannot expel disability, without expelling oneself. We are all deviant, and therefore we are all disabled, particularly if the only distinction between the aberrance of deviance and the integration of disability is whether pity is elicited for one's ailments. Then again, this might only be our own attempt to fit a prosthesis on Beckett's prose—an attempt to find a moral insight that resolves the tension that we ourselves created. The Deviant feels little need for such prosthesis though. He moves forward when expelled, at times expelling himself with little resentment or reflection. No chorus appears at the end of the narrative to provide the reader with a moral, and no resolution is found; the Deviant continues to wander toward death, rejecting all prosthesis, narrative or otherwise. His expulsion does not resolve the tensions of the narrative, which itself continues to wander towards its own end, filled by its own deviance. The reader, thus marked, and perhaps marred, by the narrative is thus left alone by Beckett to wander toward her own death, expelled, having achieved no appeasing revelation, sympathetic insights, or definite conclusions—wanting to laugh, wanting to cry and vaguely feeling in need of a shower.

## Endgame

The question of Beckett's use of prosthesis brings us back to the beginning of this article and the disabled Hamm of "Endgame." Hamm, unlike the Deviant, is marked as disabled, at least insofar as his disabilities are clearly labeled; he is blind and infirm, and those disabilities compel much of the motion and dialogue of the play. Certainly, it would seem that Hamm stands out as an "Aha! Here we see Beckett clearly using narrative prosthesis!" moment, as it seems that Beckett is using Hamm's disability specifically for the purpose of forwarding the narrative. Similarly, then, Pozzo's blindness would mark a significant moment in "Waiting for Godot," perhaps even a moment of plot development propelled by disability, and, thusly, an incidence of narrative prosthesis.

Perhaps this is accurate. However, these plays also reveal a fundamentally different application of narrative prosthesis by Beckett, if it can be called such. Simply, *all* of the characters populating "Endgame" are disabled. Disability, therefore, marks *the play*, not the characters. Hamm is not the only disabled character. Clov is going blind and has a bad leg. Nag and Nell are both old, infirm, and have been left limbless after a bicycle accident. Michael Davidson in his "Every Man His Specialty": Beckett, Disability, and Dependence" argues that this is indicative of Beckett's rejection of "liberal autonomy and able-bodied normalcy" (2010, 13-27). Mutual interdependence marks all of the characters of "Endgame" and it would be inaccurate to suggest, as narrative prosthesis demands, that disability marks any one character as "special."

Similarly, "Waiting for Godot" populates the play with people with disabilities. Pozzo goes blind, Lucky cannot think without a hat, and Vladimir and Estragon, if they are not mentally or physically impaired, by virtue of their homeless, aged, and often reviled state, are certainly socially disabled. Again, Beckett presents a world populated by characters who are *missing something*. This is especially evidenced as Vladimir and Estragon themselves are missing Godot. Certainly, waiting for him prevents them from being able to act with "liberal autonomy," as they are trapped on the stage and unable to move from it without his help. Pozzo becomes mutually interdependent with Lucky when he goes blind, and the characters are all left dependent on someone by the end of the play.

Again, it is difficult to suggest that any one character is marked by disability as would be indicative of narrative prosthesis. Perhaps Pozzo's going blind marks a climactic moment of narrative prosthesis, but it seems more likely that it acts, as Davidson suggests, as a marker of Pozzo's dependency, indicating *all of our dependency*. To quote Hamm to Clov, "One day you'll be blind, like me. You'll be sitting there, a speck in the void, in the dark, forever,

like me... except that you won't have anyone with you, because you won't have had pity on anyone and because there won't be anyone left to have pity on" (Beckett 1958, 36). So perhaps there is something to be said to the argument that Beckett's prose suggests we are all disabled, and thereby disability is used by the prose as a prosthesis to mark all of us. To quote Mitchell and Snyder, "[D]isability crosses all... categories and is the one identity position that all of us, if we live long enough, may inhabit" (2000, 13). Disability is not the exception or the exceptional; in Beckettian narrative, *it is the rule*.

Like Beckett's short stories, the plays similarly lack sufficient narrative motion to suggest any moment of narrative prosthesis for the purpose of climax and resolution. Certainly no resolution is met: Pozzo is left blind, as is Hamm, and in the case of both plays everyone is left exactly where they began. "First Love," "The Expelled" and "The End" similarly begin and end cyclically, specifically with the Deviant's expulsion. It would seem, then, that the significant difference between these short stories and "Endgame" is that the Deviant's expulsion itself marks him, rather than his disability. What one comes to realize is that Beckett's narrative gesture is towards disability as a social construction of *prosthesis*. Perhaps, as Mitchell and Snyder contend, narrative prosthesis is inescapable, but Beckett's work turns the tables and removes the prosthetic from the characters. For these characters, disability is normal, which marks the reader as the Deviant who needs the prosthetic in order to engage society and to even experience narrative. Disability, so Beckett's narratives suggest, has nothing to do with bodies, minds, or needs, but rather with one's willingness to subjugate oneself to the social demand that one be "normal" through acceptance of prosthesis.

Unlike the bodily deviance experienced by the characters populating Beckett's plays, the deviance presented in the short stories are of the kind that we refuse to pity, and thus the Deviant must be expelled. And the Deviant does not want this pity. Stating of one kind man, "Unfortunately I did not need his kindness" (Beckett 1995, 89). Rather, the Deviant's rejection by society, while establishing his disability, also enables him and Beckett to reject the need for prosthesis. Rejection by society results in no need for the Deviant to find reconciliation with society. While the plays gesture toward the notion that we may all be considered disabled, the short stories suggest that *we all should be expelled*, if that is the punishment for deviance. It is only that lack of expulsion that prevents any one of us from similarly being marked deviant. If society cannot find pity on us, or if we reject that pity, our deviance will not be marked as a "disability." Society will refuse to find us a place within it as a result of our rejection of its supposedly "well-meaning" offer of prosthesis.

Arguably, the plays do use narrative prosthesis insofar as the characters of the plays are notably missing something, giving momentum to the play. What remains profound, however, is that these same characters prosthetize each other. The characters of Beckett's plays engage narrative prosthesis insofar as they depend on one another to survive—they are each other's prosthetics in their interdependence. The Deviant, however, has no prosthetic. Through his rejection of the prosthetic, or his rejection *by* the prosthetic, he cannot be labeled as "disabled" and therefore must be expelled. One cannot read the short stories without occupying the space of the disabled by virtue of reading his first-person perspective. In this way, what Beckett *shows* us in the plays, we *experience* through the reading of the short stories: we are *all* disabled. Consider the list presented to us of the pains suffered by the Deviant in "First Love." Given its length, it is highly likely that we all have or will experience some of those ailments. We are all utterly dependent on each other for both survival and for the illusion of "normalcy," a fact that would be made immediately clear if any one of us were to be expelled for our deviance.

## END NOTES

1. For the purposes of this article "The Deviant" will indicate the misanthropic expelled character who may or may not be the same man throughout Beckett's prose.
2. See, for example, Davidson (2010)

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# DEVIANT TEMPORALITY: FRANK O'HARA'S ELEGY AS ENCORE

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Frank O'Hara's 29-line elegy for Billie Holiday is hyperconscious of its place in time. Temporal markers are everywhere in "The Day Lady Died," from the title to the opening line to the poet's anticipation of how his evening will unfold. The collection in which the poem first appeared, *Lunch Poems*, defines its poetics in part in the timing of the workday, and O'Hara often makes the circumstances of lunchtime composition explicit in the poems themselves. At the same time that "The Day Lady Died" identifies its own fleeting contemporary moment (a lunch hour, a day, a year), it also traffics in more enduring images of modernity. The poet calls the date—July 17, 1959—"three days after Bastille day"; while the poem's mention of "the 4:19 to Easthampton" in line four seems casual, it points to a hallmark of modern infrastructure, trains that run on a schedule (2008); and as O'Hara wonders what book to buy as a gift for Patsy Southgate, one of his dinner companions, his indecision reveals that the dissemination of print media to a mass market, and the market's appetite for such media, are normal. At every level, "The Day Lady Died" understands its own historicity.

The death of Billie Holiday, an event whose occurrence O'Hara discovers when he purchases "a NEW YORK POST with her face on it," fits into both the micro and macro historical narratives the poem is spinning (2008 325, line 25). As an item covered in the *Post*, the singer's passing becomes a commodity with a use-by date, like the hamburger, the malted, and the copy of Verlaine for Patsy: it is part of the poem's timeline of consumable, consumed products of July 17, 1959. Contingent with this expression of Holiday's death as commonplace material is a broader memorial premise: that Holiday's posthumous status has assured her a lasting place in public memory, in a cultural timeline that will outlast an individual account of mundane lunchtime purchases. O'Hara is sure enough of this status that he allows the phrase "her face" to bear its own weight, making the assumption that we will know without further explanation whose face it is; he assumes that the subject of his memorial text does not need to be named

outright. The poem maintains a confidence in the ability of its memorial subject to endure; the tone is one of a chronicle, not a lament. In establishing a chronology and mediating Holiday's death through a commodity defined by date, "The Day Lady Died" shares in an elegiac tendency to suggest death and mourning as acts that recur even as time irrevocably advances. Lady Day emerges from this ordinary day, and until its final stanza the poem suggests the linear progression of time and the fact of expiration, are features of both small- and large-scale histories.

The closing stanza of "The Day Lady Died" disturbs this linear progression.

and I am sweating a lot by now and thinking of  
leaning on the john door in the 5 SPOT  
while she whispered a song along the keyboard  
to Mal Waldron and everyone and I stopped  
breathing (325, lines 26–29)

These last four lines, when O'Hara moves into the realm of personal rather than public memory and describes a performance he heard Holiday give, disrupt the temporal schemes the poem has established. They change the character of the elegy, and they change the individual who is elegized. The end of an elegy is a powerful position; the final lines could allow the elegizing poet to transcend and transform the initial trauma of death. But in his closing stanza, O'Hara brings back Holiday's voice, and its return is a contrast to the poem's multiple other signs of one-way temporal and spatial progressions: from Bastille Day to 1959; from 12:20 to 4:19 to 7:15; from the muggy street to the bank to the bookstore. Manipulating this performance, and the particular representation of Holiday's song as timeless, affect what we perceive as O'Hara's own poetic performance here. When he ventriloquizes Holiday's encore in the poem's final lines, buying fully into the idea that he can make music continue indefinitely, O'Hara removes himself from the scene. In this moment of deviant and wishfully conceived temporality, a flashback that creates a repeat performance in an eternal present, the elegized subject and the elegizing poet switch places.

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Encores complicate perception of time, because they extend the performance event at the same time as being a ritual, and even expected and programmed, element signifying its end (Webster 2012, 93-94). They are expressions of collective desire, as well as collective suspensions of knowledge of the inevitable: by asking for an encore, an audience makes known its wish for music to continue, its wish to draw out a (perceived) relationship with the performer, and its wish to engage with the possibility that music could keep happening indefinitely.

The impulse for encore, and the fantasy implicit therein, is the impulse of the last stanza of “The Day Lady Died.” As Joanna Gavins and Josh Robinson have each noted, the first line of the stanza contains the poem’s only use of the continuous present (Gavins 2007, 142; Robinson 2010, 156). The compound forms “I am sweating” and “[I am] thinking of” have the effect of stretching time out, whereas the poem’s previous instances of simple present (“I walk,” “I go,” “I get”) imply a series of discrete, one-time events. As it begins to close, the poem evokes the state that motivates audience requests for encores: an ache to make the experience last a little longer. O’Hara moves away from a straightforward style of reporting facts immediately as they happen, and the shift in tense belies the shift to an attitude of yearning.

In the performance at the Five Spot O’Hara now repeats by imagining it, Holiday is able to fulfill this yearning. Through flashback, the poet’s desire for encore is met. Rather than conceiving of the phenomenon of music as immortal and outside time, the stanza attributes these qualities specifically to a repeat *performance*, the one O’Hara has conjured by thinking. Although the simple past tense—“she whispered”—indicates completed action in the past, “whisper[ing] along” makes the production of music seem drawn out, endless, and fluid. Michael Magee aptly remarks on the way this word choice makes music seem limitless and even exotic: the preposition “along,” he writes, “has the effect of emphasizing just how *long* the keyboard is, to the exclusion of several common definitions of ‘key’ . . . Holiday does not *sing in* a key but, rather, *whispers along* a keyboard. In doing so, she gestures outside the realm of Western musical notation” (Magee 2001, 717).

The performance itself, like the impulse that generated it, appears to take place across time, rather than as a discrete, closed action. Singing is the only activity the poem allows to happen simultaneously with other events: “while she whispered a song along the keyboard / to Mal Waldron,” O’Hara is both “leaning on the john door” and “stop[ping] breathing.” Unlike the earlier neat sequence of errands, in which no task impinges on its neighbors, Holiday’s singing is conflated with the moment of memory, with O’Hara’s location inside the club, and with his response to the performance. In this way, the poem has discarded coordination for something more complex. Focus multiplies; time becomes difficult to parse out. What the poem’s syntax reflects, as O’Hara builds up his eternizing

conceit in the final lines, is the deeply ambivalent nature of encore: continuation and repetition; fantastical extension and ritual marker of finality; real reprieve from the shock of musical ending and condition contrary to fact.

The eternizing conceit of encore confounds O’Hara’s role as elegist, because when he gives himself over to the power of the performance, he explains, “I stopped breathing.” If, as Max Cavitch posits, elegies are “poems about being left behind,” “The Day Lady Died” cannot be such a poem, at least in the traditional sense, as it figures the poet’s own death (Cavitch 2007, 1). Committing to the experience of encore, and *as* a poetic closing strategy committing to its deviant temporality, also results in O’Hara’s profound deviation from generic convention. Holiday’s death is not another item in the poem’s catalogue of perishable materials; the environment of the imagined encore inverts the relationship in which O’Hara is performer, consumer, and survivor. As he leans on the john door, rather than doing the consuming, O’Hara is himself consumed. O’Hara expires; Holiday is left behind.



Magee has argued that the nuances of O’Hara’s relationships with jazz musicians, and his stance with respect to the burgeoning African American culture in the Village in the late 50s, are crucial pieces of prior knowledge for grasping “The Day Lady Died.” Magee does the careful work of historicizing these relationships, noting that O’Hara’s interest in jazz and its politics was unwavering yet never fawning, and that he was averse to performing poems in jazz clubs, lest he “strick[e] any sort of jazz-poetry pose that might devolve into cliché” (Magee 2001, 706). For Magee, the hesitation O’Hara felt about participating in the jazz community, and the distance that the poet seemingly maintains from Holiday in the text, allows “The Day Lady Died” to avoid being a racially charged caricature—what Ross calls a “white intellectual idolizing a black jazz performer” (1990, 385). Magee also believes that the aesthetic dialogue fostered in the Five Spot is key background for the poem: “What we have in the milieu of the Five Spot is an instance where artists involved in different mediums were consciously tampering with each other . . . in order to invent new forms of democratic symbolic action” (Magee 2001, 714). Accordingly, the dynamic between Holiday and “everyone” in last stanza of “The Day Lady Died” is a vision of democratic social relationship rooted in the particular downtown intellectual context of the period (716).

If O’Hara is offering a view on a specific music whose form and performance aim to redefine individual identity through a collective, is finding encore in the poem an ahistorical misreading? To say that the poet desires, represents, and experiences the consequences of Holiday’s “encore” comes with musicological implications: it links the poem to the Romantic period, when the encore developed alongside the performance practice of the solo recital. The development of the encore is contingent with the rise of the Romantic figure of the virtuoso (embod-

ied most famously in Franz Liszt). For this reason, a critic like Magee might warn against the ahistoricity of consigning O'Hara to the Romantic strain of virtuosophilia that is implied when we talk about encore at all, as if O'Hara were a twentieth-century mouthpiece for the nineteenth-century phobia/obsession with virtuosity, a mode of expression whose poles are either mere technicality or sentimental excess.

But why should the context of the Five Spot, and O'Hara's engagement with jazz, prevent us from seeing the poem as a vision of virtuosity, of which encore is an historical part? It's no stretch to see the poem figuring Holiday as a technically capable, sentiment-inducing, encore-delivering virtuoso. The poem pays close attention to her technique as such, as well as its effect on the audience: O'Hara characterizes the method of sound production (whispering) as much as the product (song). There is a further Romantic precedent lurking within O'Hara's encore fantasy. When he stops breathing, O'Hara goes Keats one better, when Keats wishes, at the opening of "Ode to a Nightingale," that he "might drink, and leave the world unseen, / And with [the singing nightingale] fade away into the forest dim: / Fade far away, dissolve. . . ." (Keats 1959, 205, lines 19-21). The Keatsian speaker pulls back from fading away altogether, and from giving himself over to forbidden virtuosophilia; ultimately, the Ode assumes control of its own ending ritual, delivered by a speaker unnerved but unmistakably alive, not effaced for the sake of the nightingale's potential encore. O'Hara, on the other hand, pulls the trigger: leaves the world, fades away, stops breathing.

The notion of O'Hara as a poet grounded in Keats-era aesthetic concerns about and discourse on virtuosity, both in his representation of the arts and his sense of how poetic unfolding should occur, is a scholarly turn we are poised to make. As part of this turn, we might consider a definition of virtuosity that goes beyond the commonplace one, technical facility at the expense of real sentiment—a charge that has been leveled at O'Hara, in various ways, in his early critical reception. Virtuosity encodes tension:

between virtue and superfluity; between easiness and difficulty; between openness and elitism. Interaction of these forces, which the term virtuosity productively describes, is frequently the source of drive in O'Hara's poems. Therefore, in the poems' own lyric voice, we should not mistake O'Hara's signature easiness for a performance devoid of integrity; and in the music his poems figure, we should not mistake attention to technique, or attention to celebrity, for forms of hero-worship. In the case of "The Day Lady Died," temporal virtuosity, or deviance through ultimate chronological openness, enables the poem to achieve its stunning ontological inversions: poet living and singer dead; poet dead and singer living. We know these changed states to be a fiction. But, however briefly, the poet and the singer have equal claim on life and death. In O'Hara's play on time, virtuosity becomes a form of democracy.

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